

THE VICTORIA HISTORY OF THE COUNTY OF CHESTER

VOLUME III



PUBLISHED FOR THE
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON INSTITUTE
OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH
BY
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS


VOLUME III contains the history of ecclesiastical organization in Cheshire, both before and after the Reformation, medieval religious houses, Chester cathedral, education before 1903, and the more historically important endowed grammar schools in the county.

In the Middle Ages the organization of the church in Cheshire was based on parishes which in the east of the county were exceptionally large, while those of the west resembled more closely the normal English parish. Between 1075 and 1102 Chester was the seat of a bishop; for the rest of the Middle Ages the county lay in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. In 1541 the vast but poorly endowed diocese of Chester was formed, extending into Westmorland and the North Riding of Yorkshire. In the 19th century it was reduced in size until it included little more than the county of Cheshire. The county produced both protestant and Catholic martyrs, and the nonconformist sects were well represented.

The largest and most important of the religious houses were St. Werburgh's abbey at Chester, which became the cathedral church of the new diocese in 1541, and Vale Royal, a Cistercian house founded by Edward I. Recent archaeological work has revealed much about some of the smaller houses, especially Norton. The city of Chester contained, in addition to St Werburgh's, a nunnery, friaries, and hospitals. Like the diocese, Chester cathedral suffered from an inadequate endowment, but its standing among English cathedrals improved under energetic deans in the late 19th and the 20th century.

The rapid growth of industrial towns, especially in north-east Cheshire, created a pressing need for schools, but the institution of school boards, the late 19th-century solution favoured by central government, failed to make headway. Grammar schools were endowed in many of the towns and villages in the 16th century and later, and the histories of seventeen of them are described in the volume.

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THE VICTORIA HISTORY
OF THE
COUNTIES OF ENGLAND

A HISTORY OF
CHESHIRE
VOLUME III



ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, STOCKPORT
built 1896-7

THE VICTORIA HISTORY OF THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND

EDITED BY C. R. ELRINGTON



THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
INSTITUTE OF
HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

OXFORD LONDON GLASGOW
NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE HONG KONG TOKYO
DELHI BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI
NAIROBI DAR ES SALAAM CAPE TOWN

© *University of London* 1980

ISBN 0 19 722754 6

Text set in 12/14 pt and 9/10 pt VIP Sabon, printed and bound
in Great Britain at The Pitman Press, Bath



INSCRIBED TO THE
MEMORY OF HER LATE MAJESTY
QUEEN VICTORIA
WHO GRACIOUSLY GAVE THE TITLE TO
AND ACCEPTED THE DEDICATION
OF THIS HISTORY

A HISTORY OF THE
COUNTY OF
CHESTER

EDITED BY B. E. HARRIS

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE present volume is the second to be published as a product of the partnership between the Cheshire County Council and the University of London Institute of Historical Research. The history and nature of that partnership, begun in 1971, are outlined in the editorial note to Volume Two of the Cheshire History, which was published in 1978. The University again records its deep appreciation of the generosity both of the County Council and of the Leverhulme Trust, which has continued to make substantial grants towards the cost of compiling the Cheshire History. Warm thanks are also offered to the University of Liverpool for its continuing support of the History, particularly in making available for the editorial staff a room in the History Department at Liverpool.

Many people have helped in the course of the compilation of this volume. Some of them, notably the headmasters of schools whose history is recorded below, are named in the footnotes to the articles with which they were concerned or in the preamble to the list of illustrations. They are all most cordially thanked, as are also those who kindly gave access to buildings. Among those who made documentary material available a particular debt of gratitude is acknowledged to the Revd. Canon K. R. Maltby, for access to diocesan material, and, as with the preceding volume, to Mr. B. C. Redwood, the Cheshire County Archivist, to Miss A. M. Kennett, the Chester City Archivist, and to their respective staff; among the much-used material in Miss Kennett's care is the Thomas Hughes Collection belonging to the Chester Archaeological Society, whose permission to consult their documents is gratefully recorded. It is a pleasure also to thank Mrs. Anne McLoughlin for help in running the Cheshire V.C.H. office and, once again, Professor A. R. Myers of the University of Liverpool for his wide-ranging support and encouragement.

The structure and aims of the *Victoria History* as a whole are outlined in the *General Introduction* published in 1970.

LIST OF CLASSES OF DOCUMENTS IN THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE USED IN THIS VOLUME WITH THEIR CLASS NUMBERS

Chancery		Exchequer of Receipt	
C 1	Early Chancery Proceedings	E 403	Enrolments and Registers of Issues
C 81	Warrants for the Great Seal, Series I	Ministry of Education	
C 143	Inquisitions Ad Quod Damnum	ED 27	Endowment Files: Secondary Edu- cation
Palatinate of Chester		Home Office	
CHES 2	Enrolments	HO 129	Census Papers: Ecclesiastical Returns, 1851
CHES 3	Inquisitions Post Mortem	Court of Requests	
CHES 15	Exchequer: Pleadings	REQ 2	Proceedings
CHES 25	Indictment Rolls	State Paper Office	
CHES 29	Plea Rolls	SP 10	State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI
CHES 34	Quo Warranto Rolls	SP 12	State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth I
CHES 38	Miscellanea	SP 14	State Papers, Domestic, James I
Exchequer, King's Remembrancer		SP 15	State Papers, Domestic, Addenda, Edward VI to James I
E 101	Accounts, Various	SP 16	State Papers, Domestic, Charles I
E 117	Church Goods	Court of Star Chamber	
E 134	Depositions taken by Commission	STAC 2	Proceedings: Henry VIII
Exchequer, Augmentation Office			
E 315	Miscellaneous Books		
E 326	Deeds, Series B		

LIST OF CLASSES OF DOCUMENTS IN THE CHESHIRE RECORD OFFICE USED IN THIS VOLUME

Deposited Documents, Private

DAL Aldersey Collection
DAR Arderne Collection
DBE Bennett Collection
DCH Cholmondeley of Cholmondeley Collection
DDX Deposited Documents, Miscellaneous Series
DLT Leicester-Warren of Tabley Collection
DVA Venables of Agden Collection
DWN Wilbraham of Nantwich Collection

Ecclesiastical Records

EC Congregational
ED Diocese of Chester
EDA Diocesan Records: Administration
EDB Bishop's Transcripts
EDC Consistory Court Records
EDD Dean and Chapter of Chester
EDP Parish Bundles
EDR Registrar
EDV Visitation
EFC Society of Friends: Cheshire Monthly Meeting
EMC Methodists: Circuits

County Council Records

HDT Title Deeds

Parish Records, Deposited

P 3 Handley
P 6 Davenham
P 7 Knutsford
P 8 Frodsham
P 13 Middlewich
P 20 Chester, St. Mary on the Hill
P 29 Chester, St. Oswald
P 32 Backford
P 36 Little Budworth
P 46 West Kirby
P 51 Chester, St. John
P 53 Witton
P 65 Chester, St. Michael
P 87 Eccleston
P 96 Guilden Sutton
P 113 Audlem
P 119 Lymm

Quarter Sessions

QDR Enrolment, Registration, and Deposit: Religion
QJB Judicial: Sessions Books
QJF Judicial: Sessions Files

Schools

SC Schools: Central Government
SL Schools: Local Education Authorities

LIST OF CLASSES OF DOCUMENTS IN THE CHESTER CITY RECORD OFFICE USED IN THIS VOLUME

Assembly

AB Assembly Books
AF Assembly Files

Council and Council Committees

CCB Council Committee Minutes

Charters

CHB Cartularies

Private Collections

CR 55 Chester Methodist Church
CR 60 Thomas Hughes Collection
CR 63 J. P. Earwaker Collection and Manuscripts
CR 65 Chester Cathedral: Dean and Chapter

CR 72 Cotton of Combermere Manuscripts
CR 78 George Street (Primitive) Methodist Church
CR 151 Queen Street Congregational Church

Departments

DES Schools

Mayor

MB Mayors' Books
MF Mayors' Files
ML Mayors' Letters
MR Portmote Court Rolls

Quarter Sessions

QSF Quarter Sessions Files

NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

Among the abbreviations and short titles used the following may require elucidation.

B.L.	British Library (used in references to documents transferred from the British Museum)
Ches. R.O.	Cheshire Record Office
Chester City R.O.	Chester City Record Office
D.K.R.	<i>Deputy Keeper's Report</i>
J.C.A.S.	<i>Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society</i>
Ormerod, <i>Hist. Ches.</i>	G. Ormerod, <i>History of the County Palatine and City of Chester</i> , 2nd edn. by T. Helsby
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
R.S.L.C.	Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
S.E.A.	Shrewsbury Episcopal Archives
<i>Sheaf</i>	<i>The Cheshire Sheaf</i> : preceded by series number, and followed by volume number within series and page. For the 5th series, beginning in 1976, only the item number is given
T.H.S.L.C.	<i>Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire</i>
T.L.C.A.S.	<i>Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society</i>
W.A.A.	Westminster Archiepiscopal Archives

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION

IT seems probable that Christianity first reached the future Cheshire in the wake of the Roman legions,¹ although the soldiers themselves, notably the twentieth legion at Chester,² remained faithful to Mithra or to other pagan gods,³ and there survives no archaeological evidence of a church amongst the wealth of Roman remains from the city.⁴ Nevertheless by the time the Romans abandoned Britain to native authorities evidence of British Christianity is to be found at Eccleston on the Roman road leading south from Chester. The place name itself implies the existence of some sort of Romano-British population centre with organized Christian worship,⁵ and the discovery of a plausibly Christian burial site nearby supports the identification.⁶

There is a persistent tradition that St. Germanus of Auxerre visited the Chester area on his first expedition to England to counter the Pelagian heresy in 429, and that he defeated a heathen army at Maes Garmon (Flints.), about ten miles from Chester.⁷ Although the tradition is not usually credited,⁸ its persistence reflects the importance of the Celtic church in this area as the English pressed westward during the late 5th and the 6th centuries. Until the ascendancy of Mercia the area of Cheshire west of the river Gowy is thought to have looked westward to its political centre in the Welsh kingdom of Powys,⁹ and its religious in the Celtic monastery at Bangor Iscoyd on the river Dee, now a few miles inside Flintshire.¹⁰ That house like its sister foundation at Bangor-on-Menai was established by St. Deiniol early in the 6th century and was soon flourishing, having, according to Bede, a community of over 2,000 by the year 600.¹¹ It was destroyed after the battle of Chester c. 616, but had by then provided a centre for the Celtic church in the area for over 100 years. It also provided in Abbot Dinooth the leader of the Celtic side in the discussions with St. Augustine at the synod of 603 or 604,¹² which probably took place at Chester.¹³

A synod at Chester and place-names such as Eccleston¹⁴ and Landican in Wirral¹⁵ provide fragmentary evidence of a flourishing church in west Cheshire at the time. Dedications to St. Deiniol at Hawarden (Flints.) and Worthenbury (Flints.), and other dedications to Celtic saints at West Kirby, Chester, Heswall, and Wallasey¹⁶ are

¹ *Christianity in Brit. 300-700*, ed. M. W. Barley and R. P. C. Hanson, 40-2. The help of the Very Revd. G. W. O. Addleshaw and of Dr. C. A. Haigh in the preparation of this article is gratefully acknowledged.

² W. J. Williams, 'Cult of Mithra in Deva', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxiv. 111.

³ Margaret Deanesly, *Pre-Conquest Ch. in Eng.* 3, 7; *Christianity in Brit.* 51-4.

⁴ J. D. Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 6. Thanks are due to Mr. D. F. Petch for confirming this point.

⁵ *Christianity in Brit.* 87-9; *P.N. Ches.* (E.P.N.S.), iv. 151.

⁶ The site was enclosed in a way which resembles enclosure of early Celtic monasteries: Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 7-8; G.W.O. Addleshaw, *Pastoral Structure of Celtic Ch. in N. Brit.* 13-14, 19-20.

⁷ *Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer, i. 36; Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 9-13.

⁸ Deanesly, *Pre-Conquest Ch.* 26, 29-31; E. Davies, *Flints. Place-Names*, 104.

⁹ Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 13-14, 19.

¹⁰ Dorothy Sylvester, 'Ches. in Dark Ages', *T.H.S.L.C.* cxiv. 1-20; J. McN. Dodgson, 'Eng. Arrival in Ches.' *ibid.* cxix. 1-36; Addleshaw, *Pastoral Structure of Celtic Ch.* 7-23.

¹¹ *Baedae Opera Historica*, i. 84.

¹² *Ibid.* i. 82-3; R. H. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 13.

¹³ J. D. Bu'Lock, 'Battle of Chester', *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxii. 50; *Annales Cambriae* (Rolls Ser.), 6.

¹⁴ The addition of the *-ton* suffix suggests that the place was still associated with a ch. in Anglo-Saxon times: *P.N. Ches.* iv. 151.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 266.

¹⁶ J. Brownbill, 'Ancient Ch. Dedications in Ches. and S. Lancs.' *T.H.S.L.C.* liv. 30-4.

not contemporary,¹⁷ although they may reflect later medieval recognition of the importance of the early Celtic church in the area. The conversion of the Wirral peninsula should possibly be attributed to the missionary work of St. Kentigern in the later 6th century as Jocelyn of Furness, his 12th-century biographer, seems to imply,¹⁸ but the story of Kentigern's visit to North Wales is not generally credited.¹⁹ If in existence at such an early date the church in Wirral would probably have been tended by St. Asaph and his successors rather than from Bangor-on-Dee.

Although the defeat of the British by the Northumbrians under Aethelfrith and the death of many of the monks from Bangor at the battle of Chester c. 616 probably did not disastrously affect the British church in the Cheshire area,²⁰ it marked the beginning of large-scale Anglian settlement west of the Gowy, which was to result in the spread of Mercian influence under the heathen Penda and his Christian successors, probably as far westward as Offa's Dyke.²¹ The first English settlers in the borderland were certainly heathen, but they were probably too few in number to develop heathen institutions or to threaten the church there before the conversion of Mercia began c. 650,²² and the history of the church in the area became closely associated with that of St. Chad and his successors at Lichfield.

Information about the religious history of Mercia as a whole and the complicated political background against which it took place is far from complete²³ but some express evidence survives for the growth of the church in Cheshire.²⁴ Christianity appears to have progressed greatly during the early years of Mercian rule as largely peaceful settlement was followed by the missionary work of men like St. Chad and St. Wilfred.²⁵ Besides the British churches in the west of the county, missionaries may have found Christian sites further east, at such elevated sites as Dunham on the Hill, Overton near Frodsham, Wrenbury, Marbury, Wybunbury, Bunbury, Astbury, Prestbury and Barthomley, where the place-names suggest fortified sites and where there were subsequently ancient churches.²⁶ No contemporary evidence of Christianity in those places, however, survives, although the place-names Chadkirk and Chadwick may recall the work of the first bishop of Lichfield. Dedications to St. Chad at Over and St. Wilfred at Davenham, Grappenhall, Mobberley, and Northenden, although not contemporary may also indicate a later tradition of their missionary work in the county.²⁷ Medieval chroniclers in Chester held that the collegiate church of St. John was founded c. 689 by King Ethelred of Mercia and Bishop Wilfred.²⁸ It is possible also, in view of her later association with the city, that St. Werburgh, King Ethelred's niece, who had been granted by him some control over Mercian nunneries,²⁹ set up a small foundation in Chester. William of Malmesbury alone asserts that she was a nun there.³⁰

Further evidence of the church in Cheshire in pre-Scandinavian times is provided by archaeological remains, the most complete and impressive of which are the Sandbach crosses. Taken with fragments from the neighbourhood, notably one from nearby Over, they attest an important stone workshop in Sandbach probably at the

¹⁷ *Studies in Early Brit. Hist.* ed. Nora K. Chadwick, 176–88.

¹⁸ A. E. P. Gray, 'Origin of Christianity in Wirral', *Jnl. Brit. Arch. Assoc.* xlv. 31.

¹⁹ *Studies in Early Brit. Ch.* ed. Nora K. Chadwick, 316–17.

²⁰ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxiv. 16; cxix. 34–6.

²¹ *Ibid.* cxiv. 17–19; Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 37–44.

²² Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 30.

²³ *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 1–7; *V.C.H. Hunts.* ii. 357; *V.C.H. Bucks.* ii. 279–81; F. T. Wainwright, 'NW. Mercia', *T.H.S.L.C.* xciv. 3–55.

²⁴ For what follows see Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 33–4, 44–9.

²⁵ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxix. 35.

²⁶ *Ibid.* cxiv. 17; Deanesly, *Pre-Conquest Ch.* 193; *P.N. Ches.* i. 212; ii. 20, 285; iii. 5, 80, 106, 119, 253, 305.

²⁷ *T.H.S.L.C.* liv. 26. Cf. Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 34.

²⁸ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxix. 32–3.

²⁹ *Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, i (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxix), p. ix.

³⁰ R. H. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 116; Wm. of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Angl.* (Rolls Ser.), 308–9.

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION

beginning of the 9th century. It may have been attached to a minster church, dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, which is thought to have been founded there as early as the late 7th century.³¹ Other pre-Scandinavian stonework also survives from Chester and from Overchurch in Wirral,³² the latter providing evidence of an English church and settlement adjacent to the old Celtic community at Landican.

Despite this evidence of the advance of Christianity, most villages in Cheshire, as elsewhere in England, remained churchless until at least the 10th century. The needs of worshippers were mainly met through the 'old minsters', of which it may be assumed St. John's Chester was one,³³ and the church at Sandbach probably another. Even if some landowners succeeded under Mercian rule in providing village churches,³⁴ their efforts may have been partly effaced by the Norsemen in the century after 850, even though Norse penetration of the county was largely peaceful.³⁵ Sea raiders were indeed still plundering Cheshire as late as 980,³⁶ but by then the English had regained much lost ground under the kings of Wessex and the church was sharing in the recovery. The chief events that mark the revival of Christianity in Cheshire in the 10th and 11th centuries are the grant by King Edgar of a new charter to St. Werburgh's college in 958,³⁷ the same king's visit to St. John's Chester in 973,³⁸ and Earl Leofric of Mercia's generous re-endowment of both houses before 1057.³⁹ In addition during that period the number of churches in the county was increased as lords set up churches or chapels on their estates, and some villages provided endowments for priests.⁴⁰ The process was furthered by King Edmund and King Edgar who enforced the payment of tithes, and by Canute and Ethelred who protected church endowments from lay depredation.⁴¹

Domesday Book mentions, besides St. Werburgh's and St. John's, three other churches in Chester, and 28 villages with a church or priest.⁴² It does not, however, exhaustively list the churches in Cheshire at the conquest.⁴³ Others at Macclesfield, Prestbury, Shotwick, and Stoke were destroyed when the Conqueror avenged himself for resistance shown in Cheshire.⁴⁴ The remains of pre-Norman crosses at Cheadle, Over, Eccleston, and Hilbre,⁴⁵ and possibly the existence of early dedications to St. Bridget and St. Olave in Chester, and of place-names such as Plemstall,⁴⁶ extend knowledge of the pre-Conquest church in the county. There may have been more than 45 churches which the evidence reveals existed at the Conquest, but probably the number was not much larger.⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the spread of Christianity in Cheshire up to the 11th century, and further expansion under the Normans, the establishment of village churches in the county never went as far as in other areas further south. Consequently until

³¹ A.C.F. Tait, 'Sandbach Crosses', *T.H.S.L.C.* xcvi. 1-9; C. A. R. Radford, *Sandbach Crosses*, 1-9.

³² Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 49; E. W. Cox, 'Overchurch and its Runic Stone', *T.H.S.L.C.* xliii-xliv. 314-19; *Hist. Atlas of Ches.* ed. Dorothy Sylvester and G. Nulty, 14-15.

³³ Dorothy Sylvester, 'Par. and Township in Ches. and NE. Wales', *J.C.A.S.* liv. 30.

³⁴ G. W. O. Addleshaw, *Beginnings of Par. System*, 11-15.

³⁵ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxix. 1-7; Deanesly, *Pre-Conquest Ch.* 230-50.

³⁶ Deanesly, *Pre-Conquest Ch.* 55-7.

³⁷ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i. 8-13.

³⁸ Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 55.

³⁹ *Chron. Florence of Worc.* ed. T. Forester (London, 1854), 159; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. xix, 8-13. The Domesday manors T.R.E. numbered 10 hides more than

Edgar's grant: *Dom. Surv. Ches.* (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxv), 93-101.

⁴⁰ Addleshaw, *Beginnings of Par. System*, 11-15; *Development of Par. System*, 11-17.

⁴¹ Addleshaw, *Development of Par. System*, 13-16.

⁴² *Dom. Surv. Ches.* 79-243; F. H. Crossley, 'Chronological Data relating to Ch. of Ches.' *T.L.C.A.S.* lvii. 81-2; Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 78-9.

⁴³ *Archaeologia*, lxvi. 61-7; Addleshaw, *Development of Par. System*, 12-14.

⁴⁴ *T.L.C.A.S.* lvii. 82; R. V. H. Burne, 'Dom. Bk. and Ches.' *J.C.A.S.* xlix. 24-6.

⁴⁵ J. D. Bu'Lock, 'Pre-Norman Crosses', *T.L.C.A.S.* lxviii. 2-11; J. J. Phelps, 'Pre-Norman Cross at Cheadle', *ibid.* xxxvii. 95-105; J. R. Allen, 'Early Christian Monuments of Lancs. and Ches.' *T.H.S.L.C.* xlv. 7-32.

⁴⁶ *T.H.S.L.C.* liv. 26; Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 80.

⁴⁷ Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 77-81; *J.C.A.S.* liv. 30-1.

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comparatively modern times, Cheshire, like other counties to the north, retained many unusually large parishes. That was especially true of the centre and east of the county, where the medieval parishes of Great Budworth and Prestbury with 35 and 32 townships had, after Whalley (Lancs.), more townships than any other parish in England. Those of Runcorn, Acton, Middlewich, Stockport, and Sandbach were also unusually large.⁴⁸ In the west, however, and on the higher ground in the south of the mid-Cheshire ridge, smaller parishes were far commoner.⁴⁹ The reasons for such a distribution of small and large parishes are obscure. The area retained its former association with the Celtic church, despite the Anglo-Saxon advance westward in the 7th and 8th centuries,⁵⁰ because the first missionaries in Mercia were themselves Celts.⁵¹ As a result, perhaps, the unit of organization remained that of the monastic community longer than elsewhere.⁵² Consequently, the church in Cheshire was apparently still organized round the mission stations of the early bishops, and when Domesday was compiled, the old minster system survived in the east of the county in the form of very large parishes.⁵³ In the west, however, where the English had not prevailed so completely, the Celtic church appears to have developed further. Perhaps, therefore, in that region the old minsters were supplemented by smaller ecclesiastical establishments, such as small monastic communities or anchorholds,⁵⁴ from which smaller parishes were developed. Such establishments may have arisen on those elevated sites on the mid-Cheshire ridge where Celtic churches may have existed.⁵⁵ Farndon furnishes a possible example of such a community. In 1086 it had a village priest and also two other priests with a hide and a half of land.⁵⁶ These three were perhaps the last vestiges of a spiritual family.

Probably more important in determining the size of parishes, however, were the distinctive settlement patterns of the area, for the west of the future county became in Roman times and remained for centuries more civilized and populous than the north and east. The great legionary fortress of Chester, at which five Roman roads converged, dominated the area, and large Roman finds have been made in the lower Dee valley and the Wirral peninsula which indicate substantial Roman occupation.⁵⁷ Moreover, the widespread nature of settlement in the area in the sub-Roman period has been shown by a reconstruction of the extent of woodland clearance in Cheshire, which shows that whereas the east of the county, with the exception of a narrow strip in the Weaver valley, was still densely wooded in 1086, the Dee and Gowy valleys and the Wirral peninsula had been largely cleared by the time of Anglian settlement.⁵⁸ The very size of the monastery at Bangor-on-Dee and the surviving evidence of Celtic Christianity in the area give a clear indication of the importance of the area at the time. The most substantial evidence of the greater development of the areas where smaller medieval parishes abounded is provided by the Domesday Survey,⁵⁹ and later evidence indicates that the disparity in settlement between the western lowlands and the rest of the county was also marked during the later Middle Ages.⁶⁰ This disparity remained very important in the development of the parochial

⁴⁸ J.C.A.S. liv. 28-30.

⁴⁹ *Hist. Atlas Ches.* 37.

⁵⁰ Bu'Lock, *Pre-Conquest Ches.* 37-44.

⁵¹ J. L. G. Meissner, *Celtic Ch. in Eng.* 159-69; Moorman, *Hist Ch. in Eng.* 19.

⁵² J.C.A.S. liv. 23-35; Addleshaw, *Pastoral Structure of Celtic Ch.* 1, 27-30.

⁵³ *Archaeologia*, lxvi. 93-6; *Liverpool Essays in Geography*, ed. R. W. Steel and R. Lawton, 163-4.

⁵⁴ Addleshaw, *Pastoral Structure of Celtic Ch.* 19-23.

⁵⁵ *Liverpool Essays in Geog.* 160-1; *T.H.S.L.C.* cxiv. 17.

⁵⁶ *Archaeologia*, lxvi. 93.

⁵⁷ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxiv. 7; F. H. Thompson, *Roman Ches.* 24-65, 97-9; *Hist. Atlas Ches.* 13.

⁵⁸ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxiv. 1-7.

⁵⁹ I. B. Terrett, 'Ches.' *Dom. Geog. N. Eng.* ed. H. C. Darby and I. B. Terrett, 348, 374-5, 380-3; *Hist. Atlas Ches.* 19, 21; J.C.A.S. xlix. 24-6.

⁶⁰ Dorothy Sylvester, 'Manor and Ches. Landscape', *T.L.C.A.S.* lxx. 3, 14-15; H. J. Hewitt, *Medieval Ches.* (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxxviii), 1-9, 144-68.

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structure of the county, and was to affect the religious development of Cheshire⁶¹ until a new phase of parochial development began in the early 19th century.⁶²

Although the Normans brought many changes to the church in England, and built numerous parish churches,⁶³ their impact on Cheshire was delayed, and when it came, limited, because the county had been in Anglo-Saxon times and remained throughout the Norman period comparatively poor and sparsely populated. The revival of monastic life in the 10th and 11th centuries, it is true, had left its mark upon the county in the two communities at Chester,⁶⁴ but it was not until the arrival of the Normans that they were reformed and revitalized; St. John's as the Norman bishop of Chester's cathedral,⁶⁵ and St. Werburgh's as an abbey following the Benedictine rule so favoured by the invaders.⁶⁶ Under the Normans too, a few other monasteries were established in the county, although they all date from the mid 12th rather than the late 11th century.⁶⁷ In Cheshire, however, the building of Norman parish churches progressed only slowly and the establishment of organized diocesan life was hindered by successive moves of the see.⁶⁸ As elsewhere, churches were built by the new Norman lords for the tenants of their manors,⁶⁹ as at Shocklach before 1150,⁷⁰ or as private chapels, as at Cattenhall in Frodsham,⁷¹ and the churches of Coddington, Waverton, Tattenhall, and Christleton which were given to St. Werburgh's at the end of the 11th century⁷² were clearly built by the first generation of invaders,⁷³ but they were exceptions. Later Norman churches were built at Church Minshull, Nantwich,⁷⁴ Bromborough, Bruera, Church Lawton,⁷⁵ and Thurstaston,⁷⁶ and evidence of 12th-century work has been found at Handley, Ince, Grappenhall, Stoke, Prestbury, and Mottram,⁷⁷ but that virtually exhausts the list of possible Norman foundations.⁷⁸

The boundaries of the diocese within which Cheshire lay did not alter between the time they reached the Ribble in Lancashire c. 923 and the formation of the diocese of Chester in 1541, but the location of the episcopal see underwent a number of changes during the Norman period. The last Anglo-Saxon bishop of Lichfield, Leofwine, appointed in 1053, was unacceptable to the Normans because of his wife and children, and was summoned to the legatine council of 1070 to answer for them. When he refused to appear and chose to resign his see to the king instead, Lanfranc committed the oversight of the vacant diocese to Wulfstan, the collaborating Saxon bishop of Worcester,⁷⁹ until Peter was consecrated bishop of Lichfield in May 1070.⁸⁰ It was the Norman Peter who, in accordance with Lanfranc's policy of moving bishoprics to walled towns,⁸¹ transferred the see to the collegiate church of St. John in Chester in 1075. By then Chester was already a substantial town,⁸² and the bishop apparently had considerable property in the area.⁸³ As at St. Werburgh's

⁶¹ Below, Protestant Nonconformity.

⁶² *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 87-9.

⁶³ Most medieval churches stand on the site of a Norman church: F. H. Crossley, 'Ches. Churches in 12th Cent.' *J.C.A.S.* n.s. xxxii (2). 75; MacDonald, *Lanfranc*, 113.

⁶⁴ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. xix; *Dom. Surv. Ches.* 92-3.

⁶⁵ D. Jones, *Ch. in Chester, 1300-1540* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. vii), 4-5.

⁶⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. xxii-xxv; MacDonald, *Lanfranc*, 141-52; F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon Eng.* 665.

⁶⁷ D. Knowles, *Monastic Orders in Eng.* 175-90; below, Religious Houses.

⁶⁸ Below.

⁶⁹ *J.C.A.S.* n.s. xxxii (2). 74-5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 81-2.

⁷¹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i. 94-5.

⁷² *Ibid.* 37.

⁷³ *T.L.C.A.S.* lvii. 82-3.

⁷⁴ Given to Combermere abbey in 1133; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 336, 341, 443; *T.L.C.A.S.* lvii. 83.

⁷⁵ *T.L.C.A.S.* lvii. 82-4; *J.C.A.S.* n.s. xxxii (2). 86, 90-1; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 762; iii. 11, 17.

⁷⁶ Mentioned in charter 1121-9: *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i. 51.

⁷⁷ *J.C.A.S.* n.s. xxxii (2). 81-93.

⁷⁸ Much evidence of Norman churches is lost because of the poor quality of parish church building: *ibid.* 74.

⁷⁹ *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 7-8.

⁸⁰ *Handbk. Brit. Chronology*, 233.

⁸¹ As at Chichester, Salisbury, and Norwich: MacDonald, *Lanfranc*, 101.

⁸² *Dom. Surv. Ches.* 79-85.

⁸³ Below.

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the arrival of a Norman prelate saw the start of building work at St. John's on a scale designed to turn the comparatively insignificant Saxon church into one that befitted the cathedral of what had once been a metropolitan see.⁸⁴ In 1102,⁸⁵ however, with the building unfinished, Robert de Limesey, Peter's successor, moved the see yet again, to Coventry. His chief motive seems to have been a desire to appropriate some of the wealth of the abbey there,⁸⁶ but the turbulent state of Cheshire, the isolated position of the cathedral outside the city walls of Chester, and the magnificence of the earl's Benedictine foundation of St. Werburgh's which overshadowed it, may also have played a part.⁸⁷ No bishops were enthroned or lived at Chester thereafter until the Reformation, although they continued to own a palace near St. John's, and retained the title of bishop of Chester until the 16th century.⁸⁸

Robert de Limesey's move to Coventry, however, did not mean that the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield, as they became,⁸⁹ lost their influence and authority in Cheshire. They retained much property in the county. In 1086 they had 56 burgages in the city of Chester, considerably more than the 16 in Shrewsbury and the 14 in Stafford,⁹⁰ and held a borough in Redcliff which gelded with the city. Although the see had only recently moved to Chester, they had extensive and apparently long-established rights there. Outside it they held the manors of Farndon, Tarvin, Burton in Wirral,⁹¹ Guilden Sutton, and Wybunbury which contained a total of 14½ hides.⁹² In 1151–2 the bishop retained four houses within the walls of Chester, and outside them a street later known as Bishop's Street,⁹³ and the collegiate church of St. John, the former cathedral, with its appurtenances.⁹⁴ St. John's remained in episcopal patronage until the Dissolution.⁹⁵ By 1151 they had also acquired the valuable right to two bushels of salt a year from the Cheshire salt pans,⁹⁶ but by the end of the 12th century the manor of Guilden Sutton and Burton by Tarporley, part of the manor of Tarvin, had been lost through subinfeudation.⁹⁷

In the next two centuries episcopal rights and property in the county were extended. Between 1238 and 1249, for example, Bishops Stavensby, Pattishall, and Weseham greatly consolidated their possessions at Wybunbury.⁹⁸ The most important acquisition was the advowson of the church, bought for 120 marks, which enabled the later appropriation of the rectory to the see.⁹⁹ It was eventually attached to the bishop's *mensa*.¹ Bishop Langton in 1299 acquired for himself and his successors a weekly market and a yearly fair at Burton in Wirral,² and the right to impark Tarvin wood in Delamere Forest.³ In 1345 Bishop Northburgh received from the Pope the gift, among others, of an advowson of a Cheshire church at the expense of Chester abbey.⁴

Episcopal property and rights in Cheshire received royal confirmation during the 14th and 15th centuries,⁵ and were also confirmed during the Cheshire *quo*

⁸⁴ J. W. Lamb, *Abp. of Lichfield 787–803*.

⁸⁵ The probable date: V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 7–8.

⁸⁶ Wm. of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Angl.* (Rolls Ser.), 309–10.

⁸⁷ V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 7–8; Jones, *Ch. in Chester*, 4–5.

⁸⁸ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 93–4; Lamb, *Pal. Libr.*, Cartae Misc. xi, no. 83.

⁸⁹ For the joint title see V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 8–14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 15; *Dom. Surv. Ches.* 27 n.

⁹¹ Listed in error in the returns as Burton by Tarporley, which was in the manor of Tarvin: *Dom. Surv. Ches.* 14.

⁹² *Ibid.* 27–8, 79, 86–93.

⁹³ P.R.O., CHES 34/3/26.

⁹⁴ *Gt. Register of Lichfield Cath. known as Magnum Registrum Album* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 1924), pp. 126–7.

⁹⁵ Lich. Jt. R.P., B/A/1/3, f. 21; *1st Reg. of Bp. Rob. de Stretton* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. N.S. x (2)), 165, 185. It was subject to the earl during a vacancy: *ibid.* 162.

⁹⁶ He was entitled to the salt 'in Wico': *Mag. Reg. Alb.* p. 127.

⁹⁷ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 327–8, 806.

⁹⁸ *Mag. Reg. Alb.*, nos. 521–2, 526–7, 529, 531, 536, 539–43, 545–7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 527, 529, 539; Staffs. R.O., D. (W.) 1734/J 1948, rot. 7.

¹ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), iii. 128.

² *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257–1300, 479.

³ *Cal. Pat.* 1422–9, 357–8.

⁴ *Cal. Papal Regs.* iii. 176.

⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1422–9, 357–8.

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warranto proceedings undertaken for the Black Prince in 1357⁶ and Prince Arthur in 1499.⁷ By that time they were extensive and valuable. At the start of the 14th century they had been worth about £70 a year, of which £5 came from the liberty court at Chester,⁸ and had been administered by one man, Adam of Kelsall, the bailiff of all the bishop's estates in Cheshire and Shropshire.⁹ By the 15th century the lands in Cheshire had all apparently been let to farm,¹⁰ and in 1535, with the rectory of Wybunbury, were thought to be worth £108 a year.¹¹

After the move from Chester the bishops also retained full diocesan rights in the county, although these were limited to some extent by special arrangements made with archdeacons of Chester over the administration of their archdeaconry.¹² The Cheshire over which the bishops had spiritual jurisdiction contained at least 65 churches by 1200,¹³ and it is clear that, although there were many chapelries in the large parishes of the east, the parochial structure of the county was largely complete by then.¹⁴ In 1291 the unreliable *Taxatio*, after a century of little church building,¹⁵ listed 59 parish churches.¹⁶ The 1379 Poll Tax returns, although also incomplete as a list of parishes, gave a similar number of instituted incumbents,¹⁷ and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 recorded 63 benefices with cure of souls.¹⁸

Many Cheshire churches had been appropriated by the Reformation, there being 20 vicarages listed in 1535, but there were few really poor benefices in the county compared with other parts of the diocese and province.¹⁹ In 1379 only 17 in the county were valued at under £10, and in the more generous assessment of 1535 only nineteen. Of the latter as many as 7 were in or near the city of Chester which was well provided with churches.²⁰ An analysis of the endowment of vicarages in the county, moreover, shows that nearly all vicars received some glebe and tithes which were to prove such valuable assets, if not during the 15th century,²¹ then certainly during the price rise of the 16th and thereafter.²² There was nothing unusual about vicars who received tithes, but a vicarial endowment of glebe was less common,²³ so that Cheshire vicars appear to have been particularly fortunate. The vicar of St. Oswald's in Chester, for example, had some of both the great and small tithes and a considerable glebe,²⁴ the vicarages of Prestbury and Neston were similarly endowed,²⁵ and the vicars of Audlem and Backford had small tithes and some glebe.²⁶ Eventually only three vicars in the county, those of Plemstall, Budworth, and Rostherne had to rely on a stipend alone.²⁷ Probably most incumbents in Cheshire, therefore, were adequately provided for.

The satisfactory endowment of most benefices did not mean, however, that they were adequately served by the parish clergy, because, as a result of the uneven development of parishes in Cheshire,²⁸ too much depended upon chaplains or other

⁶ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 19, 21, 181, 311; P.R.O., CHES 34/1, unnumbered.

⁷ *E.H.R.* xlix. 676–84; P.R.O., CHES 34/3/26.

⁸ *Lich. Jt. R.O., D. & C. Lich. N.* 27; cf. *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 243.

⁹ *Lich. Jt. R.O., D. & C. Lich. N.* 20–1, 27–8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, B/A/1/12, ff. 124, 130v., 164; *Staffs. R.O., D. (W.)* 1734/J 1948–9; *D. (W.)* 1734/3/2/1, 4–5.

¹¹ *Valor Eccl.* iii. 128–30.

¹² Below.

¹³ Above.

¹⁴ For a similar conclusion about *Staffs.* see *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 28, 43.

¹⁵ F. H. Crossley, 'Ch. Building in Ches. during 13th Cent.' *T.H.S.L.C.* xcv. 31–41.

¹⁶ *Tax. Eccl. (Rec. Com.)*, 248.

¹⁷ M. J. Bennett, 'Lancs. and Ches. Clergy, 1379', *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 4, 23–4.

¹⁸ *Valor Eccl.* v. 201–18.

¹⁹ *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 42; *Valor Eccl.* i. 309–45; v. 207–18.

²⁰ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 23–4; *Valor Eccl.* v. 207–18.

²¹ When a stipend was often a more valuable asset: A. H. Thompson, *Eng. Clergy and their Organization*, 117.

²² *Economica*, xxiii. 296–314.

²³ R. A. R. Hartridge, *Vicarages in Middle Ages*, *passim*.

²⁴ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, nos. 66, 75, 77–8; *Valor Eccl.* v. 208.

²⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, nos. 79–81, 98, 104–5, 109, 112–14; *Valor Eccl.* v. 213, 215.

²⁶ *Valor Eccl.* v. 213, 218.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 202, 208, 211.

²⁸ Above.

unbeneficed priests whose income was all too often thoroughly inadequate.²⁹ The reliance of the county on those inferior clerks is well illustrated by the comparatively large number of unbeneficed clergy that have been found there. In 1379 304 were recorded for the archdeaconry of Chester, of whom at least 180 were in Cheshire. Both those figures are probably conservative.³⁰ Similarly as late as 1541–2 a diocesan survey recorded as many as 315 unbeneficed clerks in the archdeaconry,³¹ and although both figures included chantry priests who were without the cure of souls, the reliance on the unbeneficed, who were often the least well educated,³² is clear.

The early development of the ecclesiastical administration of the archdeaconry of Chester was similar to that of the other archdeaconries of the diocese,³³ but by the beginning of the 14th century the archdeacon of Chester had apparently acquired some degree of independence. The exemption from episcopal jurisdiction of the Benedictine abbey at Chester and the Cistercian abbey at Vale Royal³⁴ and of the prebendal parish of Tarvin³⁵ could be paralleled in other parts of the diocese, but the 'competence' acquired by the archdeacons of Chester, which to some extent represented a parallel in ecclesiastical affairs to the palatine status of the county, could not.³⁶

There had probably been an archdeacon of Chester at the end of the 11th century, and the first substantiated reference to one dates from 1151, by which time archidiaconal development in the diocese was probably complete.³⁷ Chester became the principal of the five archdeaconries of the diocese and it was perhaps in recognition of this that in 1253 Bishop Weseham annexed to it as a prebend the church of Bolton (Lancs.) which had been given to him by Mattersey priory (Notts.). By the grant the archdeacon of Chester became a member of the Lichfield chapter, the only archdeacon to do so. That meant that until the bishop acquired the right to visit the chapter in 1396, the archdeacon was not subject personally to episcopal correction.³⁸ More significantly for his archdeaconry, even though only one archdeacon appears to have been an alien,³⁹ the possession of a prebend inclined succeeding holders of the office to spend most of their time away from Cheshire.⁴⁰ They acquired property at Lichfield and spent most of their time there.⁴¹ As a result their officials were left to administer the archdeaconry⁴² and to exercise the untypical powers acquired by the start of the 14th century.⁴³

The first surviving evidence of an agreement between the bishop and archdeacon over jurisdiction in the archdeaconry dates from Langton's episcopate.⁴⁴ The settlement reached between Langton and Archdeacon Havering in 1315 provided that the latter should exercise first-instance jurisdiction and have the right to prove

²⁹ A. Tindal Hart, *Curate's Lot*, 31, 46; Margaret Bowker, *Secular Clergy in Dioc. of Linc.* 144–5; P. Heath, *Eng. Clergy on Eve of Reformation*, 24–5. Cf. T.H.S.L.C. cxxiv. 12–16 for a more optimistic assessment.

³⁰ T.H.S.L.C. cxxiv. 5–6, 12, 25–8.

³¹ *List of Clergy for 11 Deaneries of Dioc. of Chester*, 1541–2 (R.S.L.C. xxxiii).

³² Heath, *Eng. Par. Clergy*, 81.

³³ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 30–3.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 29; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/3, f. 140.

³⁵ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 30; Lich. Jt. R.O., D. & C. Lich. Bb. 23–4; *Mag. Reg. Alb.* no. 718, p. 354.

³⁶ For what follows on archdeacons of Chester see P. Heath, 'Medieval Archd. and Tudor Bp. of Chester', *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 243–52.

³⁷ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 30–1; *Proc. Brit. Academy*, xxix. 161–7; cf. D.N.B. s.v. Peche.

³⁸ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 30–1, 143; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 244, 247n.; *Mag. Reg. Alb.*, nos. 648, 745–6; Bp. Blythe's *Visitationes* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 4th ser. vii), pp. xxiv–xxv.

³⁹ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 31; Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300–1541, *Coventry and Lichfield*, 12–14.

⁴⁰ Until 1291 they had no accommodation in the archd. and afterwards only temporally: *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 244 n.

⁴¹ *Mag. Reg. Alb.*, nos. 114, 119, 121, 124–5, 561, 671–4, 737, 767; *Cal. Papal Regs.* x. 228–9; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 244.

⁴² *1st Reg. Stretton*, pp. 5, 9–10, 17, 162–3, 169, 174, 176, 183–8; *2nd Reg. Stretton* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. n.s. viii), 92, 118; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14, f. 96; B. L. Harl. MS. 2179, ff. 165–9; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 246 n.

⁴³ For commissions to officials see Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, f. 135; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/1, ff. 44–5.

⁴⁴ For this paragraph see *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 245–7, 249.

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wills throughout his archdeaconry, and that he should have all synodals, Peter's pence, and the perquisites of his chapter. In return the bishop was to receive £20 a year from the archdeacon and retain all rights of sequestration and all other matters which belonged to his office by custom.⁴⁵ The agreement expired on Langton's death in 1321, but the next surviving settlement of 1361 professed to be according to custom, so it is probable that the arrangement then reached had intervening precedents. In 1361 the sum to be paid by the archdeacon for his rights was £40. Further agreements were made in 1449 and 1454 by which the bishop reserved to himself only such administrative acts as instituting, confirming monastic elections, and depriving clerks, and granted to the archdeacon, in return for the £40 pension, all powers of probate and intestate administration, the income from Peter's pence, synodals, and mortuaries of deceased clerks, and all jurisdiction in instance and *ex officio* causes, including, significantly in view of the fact that many archdeacons did not have cognizance of such matters, competence in divorce and matrimonial causes.⁴⁶ Thereafter archdeacons continued to pay the pension, and their officials to try matrimonial causes until the Reformation, so that the bishops were debarred from holding courts of first instance in Cheshire, except, apparently, during episcopal visitation.⁴⁷

It has been suggested⁴⁸ that the bishops in granting exclusive first instance jurisdiction to the archdeacons of Chester, were recognizing the general immunity enjoyed by the county of Chester through its palatine status, and were, to some extent, conceding a parallel in ecclesiastical affairs. That was, no doubt, because they were unable, without express royal support, to cite Cheshire offenders outside their county. In 1294 a clerk was prosecuted in the Chester city court for 'dragging men of this county into the courts Christian outside the bounds of Cheshire', and palatine officials continued to try to protect Cheshire immunities in that way. In 1323 the justiciar of the county prohibited Bishop Northburgh from citing the archdeacon of Chester and certain Cheshire incumbents to Lichfield, but the action was countermanded on royal instructions;⁴⁹ in 1449 Bishop Booth had to appeal to the king for power to cite offenders outside the county, and in 1455 the chamberlain of Chester prohibited Bishop Boulers from citing the rector of Northenden to the consistory court at Lichfield.⁵⁰ In the last case, as in that of 1323, the bishop gained royal approval for his actions, even though it probably represented an infringement of the archdeacon's rights as conceded by Boulers in 1454.⁵¹

Although the archdeacon of Chester had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to extend the competence of his court still further in the first decades of the 14th century,⁵² and by the 16th even regarded 'himself as ordinary, and will do as he pleases', as a bishop of Lichfield complained,⁵³ there were strict limits to his authority. He was, for example, collated by the bishop and, although for a time enjoying some personal immunity as a member of the Lichfield chapter,⁵⁴ was as subject to him constitutionally as the other archdeacons of the diocese. He and his official swore obedience to the bishop and to the mandate of his officers,⁵⁵ and his archdeaconry was always subject to

⁴⁵ As the pension was paid in 1300 there was probably an earlier agreement: Lich. Jt. R.O., D. & C. Lich. M. 3; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 245.

⁴⁶ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 247; B. L. Woodcock, *Medieval Eccl. Courts in Dioc. of Cant.* 20; W. Suss. R.O., Ep. I/1/4, f. 17; R. A. Marchant, *The Ch. under the Law*, 122.

⁴⁷ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, p. lxxv.

⁴⁸ For this paragraph see *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 248-9, 250-2.

⁴⁹ *Cal. Close*, 1323-7, 45.

⁵⁰ *Eng. Hist. Docs.* iv. 1228; *Cal. Pat.* 1446-52, 261.

⁵¹ J. P. Earwaker, *E. Ches.* i. 289-90. It may be the reason why a pension was not paid 1460-74: *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 249.

⁵² *Ledger Bk. of Vale Royal Abbey* (R.S.L.C. lxviii), 183-5; B.L. Harl. MS. 2072, f. 59v.

⁵³ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, ix, p. 239.

⁵⁴ Above.

⁵⁵ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 247; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, ff. 121v., 132; B/A/1/11, ff. 36v.-37.

episcopal visitation, during which the bishop's officers could, and did, try causes at first instance.⁵⁶ Moreover, penitentiaries who were appointed by the bishop and who had important disciplinary as well as pastoral duties, were active in the archdeaconry as elsewhere in the diocese from the mid 14th century, despite archidiaconal powers. Two were usually appointed, one each for Cheshire and south Lancashire, but in 1406 there were four.⁵⁷ Finally, and most significantly for the powers of individual archdeacons, appeals and complaints could be made to the bishop from their decisions or those of their officials, and their special powers could be suspended by the bishop, as apparently happened between 1460 and 1474.⁵⁸

There were also within Cheshire further limits to archidiaconal authority. The dean of the collegiate church of St. John in Chester, for example, successfully claimed exemption from the jurisdiction of the archdeacon for his church and the appropriated churches of St. Martin and St. Bridget in Chester in 1318 and 1542.⁵⁹ That was not all, however, for Cheshire acquired in the 14th and 15th centuries an evil, if not unrivalled, reputation for lawlessness,⁶⁰ which meant that little respect was accorded to the highest authority, let alone to that of an archdeacon or his official.⁶¹ In 1535 a former official of the archdeacon of Chester, Adam Becansaw, who appears to have been acting as a royal visitor in that year,⁶² wrote to Cromwell about certain 'notable persons and slanderous livers' who had been detected in the recent visitation of the archdeaconry of Chester, but had not been corrected, because he did not dare to proceed against them 'for fear of complaints, . . . for so much as such . . . persons have not been accustomed to be reformed by inferior ordinaries as the bishop and the archdeacon',⁶³ and other evidence of disrespect for ecclesiastical authority in the county abounds. In 1357, for example, the archdeacon's official was involved in violence over an excommunication,⁶⁴ and the numerous attacks made on ecclesiastics and ecclesiastical institutions in ensuing years⁶⁵ show how little Cheshire men feared the church's sanctions. It is not, therefore, surprising that during the early 16th century various officials had considerable difficulty in enforcing the attendance of those cited to the archdeacon's consistory court,⁶⁶ despite Becansaw's efforts in the 1520s to expand and reform its activities.⁶⁷ Nor is it surprising that Becansaw himself feared the contempt of Cheshire men for their 'pretenced ordinary',⁶⁸ and that Bishops Lee and Bird spoke of slackness in the ecclesiastical administration of the archdeaconry.⁶⁹

The appointment of rural deans in the archdeaconry of Chester lay with the archdeacon.⁷⁰ By 1224 Cheshire had been divided into the seven rural deaneries of Macclesfield, Middlewich, Nantwich, Frodsham, Wirral, Chester, and Broxton.⁷¹

⁵⁶ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/3, ff. 3-4, 12, 36v.-37, 41, 112, 118, 132v., 134; B/A/1/12, ff. 142v.-143; B/A/1/14, f. 2; *Ledger Bk. of Vale Royal*, 58; *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, p. lxxv.

⁵⁷ *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 39; *2nd Reg. Stretton*, 11, 19-20, 27, 51, 94.

⁵⁸ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 247, 249 n.; Ches. R.O., EDC 1/3, ff. 7-8. For an appeal direct to the Ct. of Arches see *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 270-1.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Ch. in Chester*, 48.

⁶⁰ See especially 36 *D.K.R.* 93, 97, 100, 104, 128, 135, 137-8, 160, 313, 497; 37 *D.K.R.* 135, 137, 140; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 77, 129, 161, 270-1, 383-4, 442-3.

⁶¹ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 250.

⁶² Becansaw became the official in 1522: Ches. R.O., EDA 2/1, ff. 44-5. Before 1535 Ric. Smith had replaced him: *ibid.*, EDC 1/8, ff. 42-9.

⁶³ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, viii, p. 191.

⁶⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 270-1.

⁶⁵ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 50-3, 79-80; R. V. H. Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 106-10; H. J. Hewitt, *Ches. under Three Edws.* 107; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 383-4; 37 *D.K.R.* 177.

⁶⁶ Ches. R.O., EDC 1/1, ff. 6-16; EDC 1/2, ff. 8-25; EDC 1/3, ff. 4-15; EDC 1/8, ff. 49-121.

⁶⁷ C. A. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancs.* 2-3.

⁶⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ix, p. 10.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 239; xvi, p. 634.

⁷⁰ C. A. Haigh, 'Finance and Admin. in a New Dioc.: Chester 1541-1641', *Continuity and Change: Personnel and Admin. of the Ch. in Eng. 1500-1642*, ed. M. R. O'Day and F. M. Heal, 147. No appointments are recorded in the Lich. regs.: F. Gastrell, *Notitia Cestriensis*, i (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] viii), 27.

⁷¹ *Bartholomaei de Cotton Historia Anglicana* (Rolls Ser.), 406. In 1291 the Broxton and Nantwich deaneries were listed as one: *Tax. Eccl.* 248.

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION

The last, after 1382, was renamed Malpas deanery,⁷² and by the 15th century, if not earlier, the rural deans had acquired the right to prove the wills of those who died with goods worth less than £40, except clerics or esquires.⁷³ They also had certain corrective powers,⁷⁴ although those were developed more fully after the Reformation. To maximize his income from the archdeaconry, the last pre-Reformation archdeacon, William Knight, retained the deaneries in his own hands, and leased their duties and profits to deputies, who were often of poor quality,⁷⁵ an arrangement taken over by the first bishop of Chester to the detriment of the new diocese.

The spiritual life of Cheshire apparently suffered during the Middle Ages from a peculiar distribution of parishes, and from the weakness of ecclesiastical authority. The spiritual care provided by the clergy, and the supervision exercised by the archdeacons' officials and rural deans, were especially weak in the large parishes of the north and east of the county. They were the parishes which had to rely most on the unbeneficed clergy, where churches were few, and where the authority of the archdeacon's official and the consistory court, centred as they were for most of the medieval period on Chester in the extreme west of the diocese, were probably least regarded.⁷⁶ The concentration of resources on the west of the county presented problems which the creation of the new diocese of Chester did little to solve, and appears to have been a reason why the north and east of Cheshire became the most radical in religious matters after the Reformation.⁷⁷

⁷² 2nd Reg. Stretton, 143; Valor Eccl. v. 211.

⁷³ Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories at Chester (Chetham Soc. N.S. iii), 1; A Colln. of Lancs. and Ches. Wills (R.S.L.C. xxx), 10-11, 19-20, 65; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 5-6, 13-14.

⁷⁴ B.L. Harl. MS. 2079, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 6, 13-14; *Continuity and Change*, 147-8.

⁷⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 1-4, 6.

⁷⁷ R.C. Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 7-17.

THE DIOCESE OF CHESTER

1540-1660

THE weakness of ecclesiastical authority in the north-west of England was recognized by the Henrician government, and when a statute of 1539 gave the Crown the power to create new sees by letters patent, the area was one given special attention.¹ Various plans for the erection of new dioceses were advanced,² and it was eventually decided to unite the two large archdeaconries of Chester and Richmond into one diocese. The position of William Knight as archdeacon of both, and the fact that Chester archdeaconry had fitted as ill into the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield as Richmond had into York may have drawn attention to such a possibility.³ The formalities of foundation were completed in August 1541. The recently dissolved abbey of St. Werburgh in Chester was reconstituted as a cathedral with a staff of a bishop, whose palace was in the close, a dean, and six prebendaries. John Bird, bishop of Bangor, was translated to the see, and the last abbot of St. Werburgh's, Thomas Clarke, became the first dean.⁴ The new diocese, divided into the same two archdeaconries, was originally placed in the province of Canterbury, but in 1542 it was transferred to York.⁵ The jurisdiction of the former archdeacons was vested in the bishop, who could nominate two archdeacons and delegate as much or as little authority to them as he wished.

The creation of the new diocese of Chester brought a large part of the north-west of England, including Cheshire, under the direct control of a bishop for the first time for over 200 years. The administrative problems that had been posed by the size of the dioceses of York and Lichfield, however, were not solved in the creation of the equally unwieldy diocese of Chester. It was 120 miles long at its longest point and 90 miles wide at its widest and it covered over 5,000 square miles. Its cathedral city was ill placed as an administrative centre for the archdeaconry of Chester, let alone for a diocese that stretched into Yorkshire. Its northern deaneries were in fact so remote from Chester that Bishop Chadderton (1579-95), even after six years as bishop, thought the diocese stretched to the Scottish borders, though it only reached as far north as Workington (Cumb.).⁶ An even greater problem than the size of the diocese was the inadequacy of the original endowment of the see.⁷ At its foundation it apparently yielded a mere £473 4s. 8d. from the revenues of the two archdeaconries and former monastic property in Cheshire and Derbyshire, although £520 would appear a more accurate figure.⁸ From that sum the bishop had to pay various fees and pensions which reduced his net annual revenue to £284 9s. 4½d. or more

¹ C. A. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancs.* 6. Dr. Haigh's assistance in the preparation of this article is gratefully acknowledged.

² P.R.O., E 315/24 ff. 25-6, 65-6, 77-8; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xiv(2), pp. 150-2; 1 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 269-70.

³ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 244; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 6. For the pre-Reformation powers of archdeacons of Richmond, see *ibid.* 4; Ches. R.O., EDR 6, pp. 2, 45-6.

⁴ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/2, ff. 207-11; T. Rymer, *Foedera* (Rec. Com.), xiv. 717-24; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xvi, pp.

509-10, 535-6.

⁵ R. H. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 103; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xvii, p. 14.

⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 7-8, 226.

⁷ For what follows, see *ibid.* 7-11; *Continuity and Change*, 145; Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, f. 35v.

⁸ The 1541 acct. underestimates rents from Bolton and Clapham rectories: Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 35v., 101-2; P.R.O., SC 6/P & M/45; SC 6/Hen. VIII/7385.

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realistically to about £330.⁹ Moreover, two-thirds of the original Chester revenues were from spirituals, and, after changes in 1547,¹⁰ the bishops had virtually no income at all from land. Spiritual revenues, largely the income derived from appropriated rectories let to farm, were a far less buoyant source of income than were profits from land. The bishops of Chester during the 16th century could not emulate other more fortunate bishops by exploitation of their lands. They had no demesne to farm directly for their household needs, no woods to sell, and no manorial revenues to increase. Also only seven of the see's rectories lay within 30 miles of Chester and all were already encumbered with leases, so there was little opportunity to farm appropriated glebe in demesne. The inadequacy of the see's finances was to have serious consequences for diocesan administration until the 18th century. The new bishop had, moreover, to establish a diocesan administration in areas where ecclesiastical jurisdiction had been held in contempt, archdeacons' officials had been lax or even corrupt, and the rural deans had often been absentees and had invariably treated their offices as sources of profit and not of responsibility. The new diocese also suffered more than most from non-resident incumbents, and had correspondingly to rely upon underpaid and non-graduate assistants.¹¹ A report on the clergy of the southern part of the diocese probably compiled for Bird on his translation, lists, in the 94 churches and chapels in Cheshire, only six incumbents and fourteen curates who served their benefices in person, and shows that none of the 150 assistant clergy in the county were graduates, and that over half of them were supported, not out of ecclesiastical funds, but by stipends provided by their parishioners or by a local gentleman.¹² Those must often have been meagre.

Bird, a one-time provincial of the Carmelite friars, had some personal knowledge of the area of his new responsibilities since he was Cheshire born and had also served as a suffragan to Bishop Lee in the diocese of Lichfield between 1537 and 1540.¹³ His first task as diocesan was to establish a spiritual administration, and he used the two archdeacons' courts previously at work in the diocese for the purpose.¹⁴ The Chester consistory became the premier court presided over by the chancellor, who had jurisdiction throughout the diocese, but Bird also allowed the Richmond consistory to continue under a commissary who had concurrent jurisdiction with the chancellor in that archdeaconry. The arrangement was subsequently to cause rivalry and confusion. In theory Bird should also have appointed two archdeacons with stipends of £50 a year each, but he could not afford such a large outlay from his already meagre income, and archdeacons were not appointed until his successor's episcopate. Instead he had to rely upon the rural deans to keep watch on the parishes. Although it is not altogether clear what powers those officials exercised before the Reformation,¹⁵ Bird certainly formalized them, and a patent of 1550 granted the right to prove small wills, and the authority to proceed in all disciplinary cases except simony and heresy and to collect synodals and procurations. Thereafter rural deans apparently imposed and commuted penances, and held their own visitatorial and correctional courts. Their posts, however, were used by Bird primarily as a source of revenue, for in return for the profits of their jurisdiction, which the deans

⁹ The 1541 acct. lists as charges on the bp. pensions which were paid by the lessee: Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 35v., 100-1.

¹⁰ Below.

¹¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 1-6, 20-45; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xx. 250.

¹² *List of Clergy for Eleven Deaneries of Dioc. of Chester*, 1541-2, 1-11.

¹³ D.N.B.; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor*

Reigns, 106-7.

¹⁴ For the rest of this paragraph see Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 10-14; *Continuity and Change*, 147-9; *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxii. 4-10.

¹⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 2-6. For the chancellor's jurisdiction in Richmond archdeaconry, see Chester City R.O., CR 63/2; below.

leased for life, they paid the bishop an annual rent amounting to £24 1s. 8d. for the twelve deaneries of the archdeaconry of Chester and to £11 15s. 4d. for the eight deaneries of the archdeaconry of Richmond. Such an administrative structure, without effective archdeacons and with rural deans who had life tenure of office, was unusual but was to remain characteristic of the diocese. It was not, however, well suited to the administration of so large an area, and its inadequacies were compounded by Bird's appointment of his senior officials.

Bird inherited in the Chester consistory Archdeacon Knight's official, Richard Smith, rector of Bury (Lancs.).¹⁶ Smith was a contentious character who was a frequent litigant in his own court and was prepared to profit from his position by receiving bribes, and he was soon replaced by George Wilmesley, a member of the Savage family of Cheshire. Wilmesley was already an experienced ecclesiastical administrator, and it appears that the bishop provided financial inducements to attract him to Chester. He paid him as chancellor a stipend of £10 in addition to his fees and in 1544 allowed him to purchase the registrarship. In order to increase his income further, he gave Wilmesley long leases and grants of episcopal property and patronage, and leased to him the three Lancashire rural deaneries of the archdeaconry of Chester with their fees. These steps disadvantaged the diocese. The former crippled its finances, and the latter deprived the troublesome deaneries of south Lancashire of effective decanal supervision. As commissary of the consistory court at Richmond, to whom he also paid a stipend, Bird appointed first Robert Layburne and then in 1544 Miles Huddleston, rector of Whittington (Lancs.). Both were able lawyers with widespread interests and members of prominent local families whose support Bird hoped to win, but Huddleston, at least, proved unsatisfactory. He was often absent from Richmond and his court was normally presided over by his curate at Whittington, Thomas Bland. Bland probably had no legal training, but was able to acquire also the rural deanery of Richmond, and in 1550 those of Kendal, Lonsdale, and Catterick. Such an amalgamation of offices under so humble a figure can have done little to strengthen ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the archdeaconry.

Bird paid heavily to attract able administrators to his diocese, and he used episcopal property to provide annuities and favourable leases for influential laymen in an attempt to make episcopal rule acceptable to them,¹⁷ but his authority remained weak despite these efforts. Wilmesley used his monopoly of diocesan offices as well as leases of episcopal rectories to support his growing family, unsuitable men became rural deans, and, as with other ecclesiastical courts at that date,¹⁸ the Chester consistory had difficulty in ensuring the attendance of those cited or respect for its orders and sanctions. The situation was so bad that in 1543 and 1550 royal commissions were appointed for the diocese to deal with matters which were normally the concern of episcopal courts, and litigants in ecclesiastical disputes sometimes had to turn to the secular courts for judgement because of the ineffectiveness of church tribunals.

Cheshire was probably the best administered part of the diocese. The royal commissions of 1543 and 1550 dealt almost entirely with Lancashire business,¹⁹ and Bird's fulminations in 1541 about the weakness of his authority and his inability to stamp out 'popish idolatry' in the diocese probably did not relate to Cheshire. He

¹⁶ For this paragraph, see Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 10–13; *Continuity and Change*, 148–9.

¹⁷ *Continuity and Change*, 150.

¹⁸ *Continuity and Change*, 230 sqq.

¹⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 12/1; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 12–19; T.H.S.L.C. cxxii. 12–22.

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blamed the number of college and other places claiming exemption from episcopal jurisdiction for his difficulties, and there were none in Cheshire besides St. John's college in Chester whose claim to exemption, recognized in 1542,²⁰ was soon lost.²¹ The creation of the diocese of Chester, however, did nothing to solve the problems presented by the concentration of clergy and of administration in the west of the county, and it was perhaps with the difficulties of east Cheshire as well as those of Lancashire in mind that Bird suggested to the Crown in 1546 that he should be allowed to acquire the lands and buildings of Manchester college as an episcopal residence in the east of the diocese. He proposed in exchange for the college to grant to the King the episcopal manor of Weston in Derbyshire, which lay over 40 miles outside the diocese. This proposal was disastrous for the finances of the see for it drew attention to a valuable episcopal manor just at a time when courtiers were enriching themselves with pickings from other sees. Bird's plan was rejected and he was forced to surrender to the King all the temporal possessions of the see, which were then sold. In return the bishop received five rectories and the advowsons of eight others and a licence to appropriate them when they became vacant. Initially the Crown paid the bishop £83 9s. 9d. in lieu of the eight unappropriated rectories, but, as they became vacant, vicarages were instituted and the pension was reduced by an amount equal to the profit obtained. The exchange, which was aimed at providing an income from spirituals at least as great as that previously obtained from the manors and lands lost, was detrimental to the see because it deprived it of landed endowment and gave it rectories burdened with long leases or living incumbents. Bird's efforts to raise income made matters worse for his successors. Most of the rectories received both in 1541 and 1546–7 were already leased by their former owners, so Bird was unable to rack rents to meet the cost of taxation or to pay debts. Instead he had to resort to granting long leases or leases in reversion in return for large entry fines. Between 1546 and 1550 he granted twelve leases of an average length of 88 years, so that the see's rents were largely fixed until the 1630s. Consecutive leases of Bowdon, Weaverham, Backford, and Castleton (Derb.) tied rents until 1655, 1660, 1665, and 1704 respectively, and the lease to Chancellor Wilmesley for £1 of Bradley rectory (Staffs.), which was valued at £17 6s. 7d. a year in 1535, resulted in the eventual loss of the rectory when Wilmesley sold the lease and gained Bird's agreement that on its expiry the property should pass to the new lessee's heirs in fee farm. These leases gained Bird perhaps £500 in entry fines, but he was still in debt to the Crown to the sum of nearly £1,100 on his deprivation in 1553.²²

A system of beneficial leasing was not necessarily detrimental to the finances of a bishopric since it was easier to administer than a system of continuous rack renting, but it depended very largely upon the granting of short leases with the consequent frequent levying of entry fines. In the 18th century when leases of Chester property were invariably for three lives, and it was generally the practice to seek a new lease as each life expired, the bishops gained an adequate if modest income,²³ but Bird's profligacy, to which his successor Bishop Bridgeman drew attention in the 1620s, exaggerated the meagreness of the see's endowments. It also committed his immediate successors to follow his example when leases fell in.²⁴

²⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, p. 634; xvii, p. 258.

²¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2103, f.99; Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 51–2.

²² Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 8–10; *L. & P. Hen.*

VIII, xxi(1), p. 477; *Continuity and Change*, 151–3.

²³ Below.

²⁴ *Continuity and Change*, 150, 162.

Bird also had considerable difficulty in improving the spiritual life of the diocese. The most pressing problems were presented by its clergy. The north-west included some of the very poorest areas of England and was, as a result, sparsely endowed with churches and unable to attract well-educated clergy to residence. Those Lancashire and Cheshire benefices which were valuable were invariably held by non-resident pluralists, and the priests who actually served the cures and the numerous chapelries of the two counties received more meagre rewards.²⁵ In 1542 only six out of 64 instituted incumbents in Cheshire were serving their benefices in person, and four of them held very poor livings.²⁶ Moreover, since none of the six and no assistant priest in the county at that date were graduates, it had in active service, besides the bishop and a few of the cathedral staff,²⁷ no priest who had completed a university education.²⁸ The situation was as serious in Lancashire.²⁹ Furthermore, in some areas there was a shortage of clergy. The parish of St. Mary in Chester, for example, which contained six large townships to the north and south of the city,³⁰ was served only by a curate and a chaplain, while the rector let the considerable revenues to farm. Worse still, some of the large parishes of the north and east of the county such as Great Budworth, Bowdon, Astbury, and Mottram-in-Longdendale were seriously understaffed.³¹ For Bird and his successors, therefore, there was a pressing need to attract better educated clergy to the diocese, to increase the numbers of ordinands, and to improve the financial prospects of those who served the churches. Although such needs were shared by most dioceses during the unsettled middle decades of the century, the situation at Chester was particularly serious because the bishop had few advowsons with which to benefice able clergy, and the better ordinands invariably sought employment further south.³² Consequently Bird's achievements were minimal. Although by 1548 the number of clergy active in Cheshire had increased by about 40, or 20 per cent, and 29 parishes in the county had acquired more staff,³³ the improvement owed little to episcopal efforts for Bird ordained far fewer to the priesthood than had his predecessors at York and Lichfield.³⁴ Moreover, if the records are accurate, only one of those priested by Bird, Henry Pendilton, a B.A., had been to a university, and of the 96 priests who first found employment in Cheshire between 1542 and 1548 he had ordained a mere ten.³⁵

Bird also appears to have done little to enforce the canons on residence, or to improve the financial position of the unbeneficed,³⁶ and he visited his diocese only once, in 1548, during an episcopate of 14 years.³⁷ As a government commissioner he was involved during Edward VI's reign in suppressing the chantries and colleges of his diocese and in listing and collecting church goods, both of which were detrimental to its interests.³⁸ There were 19 chantries and free chapels and 25 mass priests in Cheshire at the Dissolution, and secular colleges at Bunbury and St. John's

²⁵ *Valor Eccl.* v. 207-72; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 31-7; A. Tindal Hart, *Curate's Lot*, 29-65.

²⁶ *Valor Eccl.* v. 207-18; *Clergy List*, 1-11.

²⁷ R. V. H. Burne, *Chester Cath.* 3-4.

²⁸ *Valor Eccl.* v. 207-18; *Clergy List*, 1-11; Ches. R.O., EDV 2/4, ff. 13-25; EDV 2/2, ff. 1-4v.

²⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 39-45.

³⁰ *Hist. Atlas Ches.* 36-7; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 105.

³¹ *Clergy List*, 1, 6-7, 9-10; *Valor Eccl.* v. 208.

³² Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 38-43; Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, f. 50.

³³ *Clergy List*, 1-11; Ches. R.O., EDV 2/2, ff. 1-4v.; EDV 2/4, ff. 13-25.

³⁴ *Ordination Register of Dioc. of Chester, 1542-58*, (R.S.L.C. xliii), 29-80; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 73-4; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14ii.

³⁵ *Ordination Reg.* 29-80; *Clergy List*, 1-11; Ches. R.O., EDV 2/2, ff. 1-4v.; EDV 2/4, ff. 13-25.

³⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 27-8; Ches. R.O., EDC 1/10-15.

³⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/2, ff. 1-4v.; EDV 2/4, ff. 13-25. The wardens' accts. of St. Mary, Chester only show visitation expenses in 1547, for the royal visitation, and in 1548: Ches. R.O., P 20/13/1.

³⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1550-3, 393-7; 1553 & App. 416; *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1547-80, 6; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xxi(1), p. 146.

Chester. Chantry and mass priests had played a larger part in the spiritual life of Lancashire and Cheshire than in areas further south where there were more incumbents and parish churches. Many served chapels at which there was no other priest, as at Chadkirk or Disley, while others provided necessary assistance to the curate or incumbent in large parishes such as Prestbury, Stockport, or Nantwich in Acton parish. Their services were probably not lost to local communities immediately upon the Dissolution, but, once they died or found other employment and their pensions ceased, some townships were clearly deprived of clergy. Although this might not be serious in the city of Chester itself which remained well supplied, at Mobberley, Wilmslow, Pott, Macclesfield, Chadkirk, Disley, Cheadle, and Stockport in the east of the county, and at Nantwich, which lost two free chapels and a chantry, and at Bunbury which lost a college and a chantry, the Dissolution was most damaging.³⁹ Ecclesiastical revenues were lost in every county during Edward's reign, of course, but in Lancashire and Cheshire their loss was the more serious because both counties had few endowed benefices and already depended to a large extent upon parishioners providing salaries for priests.

The Edwardian confiscation of church goods was less serious in the long term than the dissolution of the chantries, but at the time it deprived many churches of a means of carrying out repairs, since the sale of church plate had always been a common method of raising funds for rebuilding. In Cheshire, as in Lancashire, the commissioners found little of great value, except in Chester itself.⁴⁰ This was not because churchwardens had already sold their plate before the commissioners arrived, those of only six churches in the county apparently having done so,⁴¹ but because Cheshire churches were uniformly poor. Shortly before his death in 1558 Bird was accused of appropriating some of what little was accumulated from the confiscations.⁴²

Religious change came slowly to Cheshire as to Lancashire during Bird's episcopate.⁴³ The clergy in particular remained conservative. John Walker, the dean of St. John's College, Chester, for example, took his dislike for Bird's reformist leanings to the extent of acquiring letters patent exempting his college and parish from the bishop's control, and other priests showed their dislike of religious change by leaving the service of Cheshire churches in large numbers during Edward VI's reign. Between 1541 and 1548 65 unbeneficed priests, or 35 per cent, died or found employment outside the county, while between 1548 and June 1554, as many as 104 unbeneficed priests, or 49 per cent, did so.⁴⁴ Very few of the latter could have been removed under Mary for having married because clerical marriage was apparently very rare in the diocese, in itself an indication of clerical attitudes, and action against the few priests involved did not begin until the autumn of 1554. Moreover, the almost complete absence of ordination lists for the diocese during Edward VI's reign may indicate an unwillingness to serve in the reformed church on the part of its subjects.⁴⁵ Further evidence of conservatism is provided by the fact that the county produced few heretics and no native martyrs during Mary's reign,⁴⁶ and by the returns made during the first Marian visitation in 1554. These show that while

³⁹ P.R.O., E 101/75/5; *Valor Eccl.* v. 207-18; *Clergy List*, 1-11. Newton chapel was returned to its owner as wrongly suppressed: P.R.O., E 117/14/10.

⁴⁰ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 21-2; P.R.O., E 117/1/46; E 117/1/47(1-2); E 117/14/16.

⁴¹ P.R.O., SP 10/3/4.

⁴² Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 109; B.L. Harl. MS. 2150, f. 268.

⁴³ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 139-77.

⁴⁴ *Clergy List*, 1-11; Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 51-2; EDV 2/2, ff. 1-4v.; EDV 2/4, ff. 13-25; EDV 1/1, ff. 16-30v.

⁴⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 155, 179-82; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/1.

⁴⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 185. George Marsh, who was executed at Chester, had never taught in the co.: ibid. 183.

Catholic service books might be scarce at that date,⁴⁷ and many churches in bad repair, only five churches were expressly reported as lacking such furniture for Catholic worship as the altar or the chancel cross and statue, the implication being that most parishes retained these items despite Edwardian injunctions.⁴⁸

Bishop Bird and his chancellor, George Wilmesley, were among the few clergy of the diocese who married during Edward's reign. The latter was able to put away his wife and retain his offices, but the bishop, despite an attempt to do the same, was tried and deprived on 16 March 1554. He was given employment by Bishop Bonner of London at Great Dunmow (Essex) until his death in 1558. His successor was George Coates, who had hitherto been a resident prebendary at Chester. During his short episcopate and that of his successor, Cuthbert Scott (1556–9), another local man, some notable improvements were made to the finances of the bishopric and to the administration of the diocese, although the latter was hampered by two long episcopal vacancies. Wilmesley retained his offices in 1554, but was made to share his considerable powers with others, and in 1556 he was removed from the chancellorship altogether. His monopoly of diocesan offices had made for an understaffed and inefficient administration, and his eclipse and removal were beneficial to the diocese. In May 1554 Coates was released by the Crown from episcopal debts of over £1,000 inherited from Bird, and that enabled him to nominate two archdeacons at the stipends of £50 originally stipulated in 1541. Robert Percival, the new archdeacon of Chester, and John Hampson of Richmond were both determined opponents of the Reformation who played an important part in improving the administrative efficiency of the diocese during Mary's reign. Under Coates Hampson shared power with Wilmesley and under Scott Percival acted as commissary general and official principal with Hampson as his deputy in the consistory court. They undertook visitations with greater frequency than hitherto, visiting the diocese in 1554–5, 1556, and 1557, and also extended the disciplinary work of the Chester consistory court.⁴⁹ The work of that court was largely made up of instance causes, in particular disputes over tithes and other dues, and over wills, slander, and matrimonial matters.⁵⁰ Offences that were discovered at visitation were usually dealt with at a peripatetic visitation or correction court.⁵¹ Such a method of correcting offenders could only be effective if visitations were held regularly, and except during Mary's reign they clearly were not until the 1580s.⁵² Faults and abuses, of course, did not come to light only at visitations,⁵³ since the authorities might hear about them through 'public fame' or from their apparitors,⁵⁴ and the only way to deal with these faults was to cite the offenders before ecclesiastical commissioners for the diocese or province, as happened increasingly in the Elizabethan period, or to call them to one of the only diocesan courts that held regular sessions, the Chester or Richmond consistory. It is, therefore, an indication of the extent of official action against delinquents during Mary's reign that although there were visitation courts active throughout the years to 1557, the Chester consistory dealt with considerably more offenders than hitherto, and that this

⁴⁷ Only one set of Ches. wardens' accts. dates from before 1553: Ches. R.O., P 20/13/1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., EDV 1/1, ff. 72–119.

⁴⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 178–9, 195–9; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 109–10; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 18.

⁵⁰ T.L.C.A.S., lxxviii. 1–13.

⁵¹ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2–6; EDV 2/5; EDV 9/2–5.

⁵² Ibid. P 20/13/1; P 65/3/1; EDV 1/2–16; York, Borthwick Inst. III/V.1578–9, CB2; V.1590–1, CB2–3; V.1595–6, CB2–3.

⁵³ B. L. Woodcock, *Medieval Eccl. Cts. in Dioc. of Cant.* 68–9.

⁵⁴ For apparitors, see Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 238–40; EDC 1/10, f. 134.

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necessitated an increase in the number of court sessions from 30 in 1550 to 40 in 1558.

Particular attention appears to have been paid under Coates and Scott to the conduct of the clergy, and to the fabric and fittings of the parish churches. One of the rectors of Malpas was cited for not residing and for the disrepair of his church, the failure of the vicar of Great Budworth to offer hospitality was noted, and the vicar of Over was cited to the consistory court and forced to undergo a penance for fornication with one of his servants. Others who misbehaved were also dealt with severely, and between 1554 and 1558, the incumbents of Stockport, Sandbach, and Backford, and a number of Cheshire assistant clergy found themselves in trouble with the authorities. The fabric of most Cheshire churches was in a bad state on Mary's accession, and very few churches had all the service books that were required. During the next six years, however, following official pressures at visitation, there was a marked improvement in conditions.⁵⁵ Although the evidence of faults extracted at the royal and episcopal visitations of the period and set out in the following table is not strictly comparable because of the different aims of the 1559 visitors and the inconsistent nature of all such evidence, it does give some

FABRIC FAULTS IN CHESHIRE CHURCHES 1554-9

	1554-6 visitation	1557 visitation	1559 visitation
Chancel	8	6	5
Nave and Tower	15	17	5
Churchyard	12	14	0
Ornaments and Books	15	8	7
Unspecified	11	5	3
<i>Total</i>	61	50	20
<i>Number of churches for which evidence exists</i>	54	52	41

Sources: P.R.O., SP12/10, pp. 283-321; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2, ff. 72-119; EDV 1/2a, ff. 6-88.

indication of how marked the improvement was. Mary's reign also saw a sharp increase in the number of Chester ordinands. The peak year was 1558 when five ordinations were held and 70 priests, 57 deacons, 76 subdeacons, and 63 acolytes were ordained.⁵⁶

Improvements in the spiritual administration of the diocese under Coates and Scott were paralleled by others in its finances. In May 1554 Coates was released from inherited episcopal debts of more than £1,000, and during the remainder of Mary's short reign the Crown showed an unusual awareness of the financial difficulties at Chester. Coates was allowed to hold at least three benefices and in February 1558 a substantial grant from the Crown increased the gross value of the bishopric by almost 40 per cent and its net income to about £620 a year.⁵⁷

Scott was deprived on 21 June 1559,⁵⁸ and the royal visitors began their work in the diocese at Richmond on 18 September. They reached Cheshire in the third week of October, and completed the visitation with special sessions at Chester cathedral and Manchester college on 26 and 30 October. Their chief task was the discovery

⁵⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2, ff. 91, 102, 110; EDV 1/2a, ff. 21, 26, 31; EDC 1/14, ff. 12v., 39v., 51, 67, 123, 132v., 148v., 211v., 263, 275-8; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 199, 202-3.

⁵⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 200.

⁵⁷ *Continuity and Change*, 154-5, which gives more detail.

⁵⁸ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 116.

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and removal of clergy disaffected towards the Elizabethan settlement, but a considerable amount of their time was taken up with correcting the sexual failings of Lancashire and Cheshire parishioners. The standard of sexual behaviour in the two counties was clearly extremely low. In 1559 the visitors found adulterers and fornicators in large numbers in nearly every Lancashire and Cheshire parish, but comparatively few in the rest of the northern province. Such offenders were also apparently less common in areas to the south. The problem of sexual misconduct, which was to remain serious for succeeding bishops of Chester, was so severe in Cheshire and South Lancashire, in fact, that the visitors had to undertake special proceedings against offenders in Chester and Manchester at the end of their visitation.⁵⁹ By then they had found few signs in Cheshire of outright opposition to the new settlement. Thirty-one of the county's clergy did not appear at the visitation, but many of those were non-resident with benefices and interests elsewhere, and only a handful of incumbents were then deprived. Register books were in short supply and a mass book, a rood, and various pictures were found in Chester, but little else of note was discovered.⁶⁰ There is reason to believe, however, their enquiries presented an unduly optimistic view.

Despite the pressing need for an energetic and able bishop, Chester was the last of the English sees to be filled after the vacancies of 1559–61, and the man chosen in May 1561, one of Elizabeth's chaplains during Mary's reign, William Downham, was thoroughly unsuitable.⁶¹ His first episcopal actions at Chester were inauspicious. He persuaded the archbishop of York to abandon his metropolitanical visitation planned for the autumn of 1561, but instead of visiting the diocese himself, he merely collected procurations and left it unvisited until the end of 1562. Moreover, he did not appoint a chancellor until March 1562, nor a commissary of Richmond until 1563.⁶² His visitations of 1562–3 and 1565 were perfunctory,⁶³ he had little success in enforcing subscriptions to the Elizabethan settlement by his clergy,⁶⁴ and he proved especially weak in attacking recusancy and religious conservatism in his diocese, which gained a reputation as a 'very sink of popery'.⁶⁵ In 1568 the Privy Council reprimanded him for inactivity and ordered him to undertake an immediate visitation. Although he complied during the summer of 1568 and reported that his people were 'very tractable and obedient', the York High Commission found it necessary to interfere increasingly in the affairs of his diocese until Downham's death in 1577. In November 1570, he was again in trouble with the Privy Council for 'sundry disorders committed within the diocese', and was summoned to London to answer for his negligence. A full-scale enquiry into his conduct led by Archbishop Grindal followed and his episcopal authority was inhibited from March 1571 until November 1572, while a thorough metropolitanical visitation was undertaken by the bishop of Carlisle. This revealed widespread recusancy in the diocese, especially in Lancashire. Downham was once more in trouble with the Privy Council in November 1575 for failure to correct absentees from church, and one of his last episcopal acts in October 1577 was to draw up a very inadequate list of the recusants in his diocese.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ P.R.O., SP 12/10, pp. 283–321, 343–62; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 1–13.

⁶⁰ P.R.O., SP 12/10, pp. 107–99, 283–321, 387; K. R. Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. xix), 1–2, 5.

⁶¹ D.N.B.; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 210.

⁶² Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 210–11; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2b.

⁶³ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2b–6.

⁶⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 33–5; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/3, ff. 21–7, 30–2.

⁶⁵ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 223.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 223–4, 254; Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 9–11, 12–16; York, Borthwick Inst., 1/1/A/Reg. 30, ff. 95, 101–2; II/HC CP 1573.

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Downham's episcopate also saw slackness in other aspects of episcopal government which affected Cheshire, notably over the supply of clergy. Through death, deprivation or resignation the count lost 75 per cent of its clergy between 1554 and 1563. Although the loss was most severely felt in Nantwich deanery which had 36 clergy in 1554 but only 15 in 1563, as many as 37 churches in the county had fewer priests in 1563. The removal or loss of so many Marian clergy, however, did not mean that all those who remained were sympathetic to the Elizabethan settlement. Despite two efforts during 1563 Downham was only able to extract subscriptions to the three articles of the Act of Uniformity from about two-thirds of Cheshire parish clergy, and from a little over half the cathedral staff, and Lancashire clergy were even less tractable. He was in no position to remove many of those who refused to subscribe, however, for that would have left parishes unserved. Consequently, he was forced to excuse expressly about a dozen Cheshire priests from subscribing, and to ignore most of the remainder.⁶⁷ Adequately trained clergy were successfully attracted in other dioceses at that time, but apparently not at Chester, for of the 176 priests ordained by Downham between September 1561 and October 1568 20 were ordained on letters dimissory, 56 were thought at the time to be unsatisfactory, and none was a graduate.⁶⁸ It is not surprising that he was criticized in 1568 for not 'foreseeing that all churches and cures' were 'provided of honest and . . . well learned curates'.⁶⁹

The behaviour of some Cheshire clergy during his episcopate was deplorable. The metropolitan visitors of 1571 found the clergy seriously at fault at Chester, Grappenhall, Mobberley, Taxal, Stockport, Waverton, and Weaverham, and in 1578 they found that many priests neglected to catechize and in over a third of the churches visited sermons were not regularly preached.⁷⁰ Similar faults had been detected during the earlier years of Downham's episcopate,⁷¹ so clearly very little had been done to improve clerical standards either through recruitment or disciplinary action.⁷² Even where Downham did exert himself in attempts to enforce improvements in the repair and furnishing of parish churches, the enquiries made in 1578 show that he achieved very little. In 1563 his visitors had found many churches and chancels in disrepair and a number of parishes without service books or bibles,⁷³ and he had proceeded through the Chester ecclesiastical commission to bind various incumbents and churchwardens in recognizances to make repairs or remove rood screens, altars, and relics from their churches. In 1564 the churchwardens of nearly every Cheshire parish were called by deaneries before the commission and given instructions, probably on the removal of altars and statues, which were to be enforced by the rural deans.⁷⁴ Despite those efforts, which appear to have petered out,⁷⁵ subsequent visitations in 1571 and 1578 show little improvement. By 1578 13 of the 72 churches visited still lacked service books; 13 naves, 10 churchyards, and 16 chancels, including 3 episcopal ones, were in disrepair; and, most significantly, 12 churches still had some object of Catholic piety such as the rood screen at Nantwich, old vestments at Grappenhall, or an undefaced altar and churchyard cross at

⁶⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/1, ff. 15-30v.; EDV 1/3, ff. 21-7, 30-2; 3 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 33-5; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 211.

⁶⁸ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/3, ff. 2-11; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 239.

⁶⁹ Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 10.

⁷⁰ York, Borthwick Inst. III/V.1578-9, CB2-3; II/HC AB 6, ff. 69-70, 72v., 73v., 75v., 76, 115v., 119.

⁷¹ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2-6; York, Borthwick Inst., II/HC AB 6, ff. 69-119.

⁷² Ches. R.O., EDA 1/3, ff. 2-24v.; EDA 12/2.

⁷³ Ibid. EDV 1/2b, 3-4.

⁷⁴ Ibid. EDA 12/2, ff. 10v., 13, 15 and v., 24, 26, 67, 77-80; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 212.

⁷⁵ Ches. R.O., EDA 12/2, ff. 84-138; EDC 1/18-21.

Weaverham.⁷⁶ As late as 1592 there was still a rood loft with pictures in Coddington church.⁷⁷

Although Downham showed lack of energy at Chester, his failures as bishop were as much the result of weaknesses in the administration and structure of the diocese as of his own neglect, and these weaknesses remained to plague his successors. Despite the Marian improvements the income of the see remained thoroughly inadequate. Downham was forgiven some of his first fruits and in November 1561 was promised £26 12s. 2d. a year from the Crown and arrears of £532 when it was found that a pension in the original endowment had never been paid. Later he was excused payment of some tenths and subsidies, but he still needed two *commendams* and died heavily in debt. Chadderton, his successor, raised a benevolence of 5 per cent of their income from his clergy, managed to evade payment of £415 of arrears of tenths, and held the wardenship of Manchester college and the rectory of Bangor *in commendam*. Nevertheless, his resources were still not sufficient to support his household and administration, and Bishop Vaughan in 1603 complained that the revenues of the see were too small to cover running costs. In fact, succeeding bishops of Chester until the Civil War needed to hold benefices *in commendam* to carry out their episcopal duties.⁷⁸

The administration of the diocese remained inefficient and its courts largely ineffective throughout Elizabeth's reign, despite the appointment of an ecclesiastical commission for Chester in 1562 and the interference of the York High Commission between 1569 and 1580. A major preoccupation for all church tribunals in that period was the enforcement of attendance, and at Chester it was never satisfactorily solved. Ecclesiastical commissioners who had powers to bind on recognizance and to fine and imprison should have been able to force the appearance of offenders, but only very small sums were apparently ever collected in fines by the Chester or York commissions, and their processes of attachment do not seem to have been efficacious. In 1567–8 the reliability of a number of the original 21 members of the Chester commission was questioned and a purge was carried out, but without apparent result. The diocesan courts were even less effective. The Chester consistory, for example, was noted for the low quality of its officers and for the ease with which it could be disregarded. It was, besides, rather more expensive than consistory courts in other dioceses,⁷⁹ and by the end of the century was having difficulty in asserting its authority in the archdeaconry of Richmond, where the two joint commissaries were trying to assert their independence. The visitation court suffered most from non-attendance, so that even when visitations were carried out thoroughly⁸⁰ there was no guarantee that delinquents would be corrected. The rural deans who might have imposed discipline at a local level did not do so, and treated their offices primarily as a source of profit, commuting penances or subletting to the highest bidder regardless of suitability. Under Bishop Bridgeman the deanery of Middlewich was sublet to a woman, and the bishop was only able to remove her when she was convicted of adultery. Efforts under Bishops Downham, Chadderton, Vaughan, and Lloyd to bring the deans more directly under episcopal control and to restrict their powers had, at best, only limited and short-term success.⁸¹

⁷⁶ York, Borthwick Inst. III/V.1578–9, CB2 ff. 3–31; II/HC AB 6, ff. 69–120.

⁷⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/10, f. 53.

⁷⁸ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 225–7, 230; *Continuity and Change*, 156–7.

⁷⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/2, ff. 229–231v.; EDR 1; West Suss.

R.O., Ep. 1/15/1.

⁸⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/2–12; EDV 2/5–6; P 20/13/1; P 65/3/1.

⁸¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 227–46; Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 74–6; *Continuity and Change*, 158–9.

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When William Chadderton became bishop of Chester in 1579, therefore, he inherited a poverty-stricken see and had to work through weak machinery for detecting and correcting offenders. Nevertheless his energy and the growing government awareness of the problems of his diocese did mean that some improvements were made during his episcopate. Born in Manchester parish, Chadderton had been chaplain to the Earl of Leicester, to whom he owed his promotions, and had held successively the Lady Margaret and Regius chairs of divinity at Cambridge, and from 1568 the presidency of Queens' College. He was no stranger to religious controversy, having sided against the puritan faction in the university and in his own college at Cambridge. His first years at Chester were active ones and he was accordingly thanked and supported by the Council. Consecrated in November 1579 he began a primary visitation of his diocese in 1580, and was, from June of that year, busy on the new ecclesiastical commission for the diocese. Appointed to the wardenship of Manchester college, he decided to reside there since it was a more convenient centre than Chester for dealing with recusants and with the unruly eastern deaneries. At first he was involved almost exclusively with recusancy in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and his zeal there was commended by members of the Council during 1580, but at the beginning of 1581 he was excused attendance in Parliament so that he could concentrate on Cheshire, where on 1 February the ecclesiastical commission began its work at Middlewich. The results of his first campaign against recusancy were less than he had hoped: the Council considered his lists of recusants incomplete, and one of his subjects, at least, thought he was too friendly with leading Catholics.⁸² Nevertheless, his early efforts provide a marked contrast with the negligence of his predecessor. Later he was rather less active personally, although he tried to eliminate recusancy in Cheshire by punitive action in 1587 and 1589–90, and in 1590 compiled a thorough list of recusants in his diocese for the government. The results of these efforts were meagre, however, and little was achieved until 1592–3, when separate ecclesiastical commissions were renewed for the city and county of Chester and the Privy Council undertook even closer control of official action.⁸³

Chadderton realized the importance of providing instruction for the laity in conservative areas, and of encouraging able preaching clergy. His first efforts in that direction, however, brought him a rebuke from the Archbishop of York. As early as 1579 he had evidently been allowing the puritan clergy of his diocese, whom he much favoured,⁸⁴ to hold preaching exercises, and in 1581 Archbishop Sandys warned him that such exercises should not be allowed without royal or synodal authority.⁸⁵ Nevertheless the authorities soon realized that the puritan clergy were far too useful in the fight against religious conservatism in this diocese to be persecuted,⁸⁶ and Sandys accordingly revised his critical opinion of the bishop.⁸⁷ During 1582 Chadderton, an able and frequent preacher himself, allowed a system of thrice-yearly synods of Lancashire clergy to be set up, and in April 1584 the Council wrote to him praising the scheme and recommending its extension. They also recommended that he should consult a number of leading clergy in his diocese, including some, like Christopher Goodman of Chester, who were prominent nonconformists. Those deliberations resulted in the establishment of a series of

⁸² D.N.B.; Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 22–35; F. Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, 90–115; *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1581–90, 56; P.R.O., SP 15/27/94.

⁸³ Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 54–77, 79–107.

⁸⁴ P.R.O., SP 12/189/12; Haigh, *Reformation and Resis-*

tance, 301.

⁸⁵ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, 102.

⁸⁶ *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, ed. B. Manning, 3–4.

⁸⁷ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, 115.

monthly preaching exercises for all the clergy of the diocese at fourteen centres in both archdeaconries. Those in Cheshire were to be held at Chester, Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Northwich. The system only lasted until the early 1590s, but exercises continued to be held in the more puritan areas of the diocese until the Civil War.⁸⁸ Although Archbishop Piers tried to bring puritan divines to order during his metropolitical visitation of Chester in 1590, and Chadderton thereafter made some effort to enforce the wearing of surplices,⁸⁹ the easy-going attitude of the authorities which continued under most of his immediate successors contrasts sharply with Whitgift's persecutions further south, and helps to explain why nonconformity had become so strong in some parts of Lancashire and Cheshire by the 1630s and 1640s.⁹⁰

The puritan divines, although often the most active and best educated clergy of the diocese, were a minority, and standards among the remainder were raised only slowly. There was now no need to provide large numbers of priests to fill vacancies as there had been in the 1560s, so Chadderton was able to take a stricter line than Downham when accepting candidates for ordination. As a result an average of only 4 priests a year were ordained for the diocese between 1580 and 1603, compared with about 22 a year under Downham, but a far higher proportion, over a third, were graduates.⁹¹ Consequently the education of Chester clergy slowly improved. In 1578 there had been about 18 graduate priests employed in Cheshire parishes, or 13 per cent, but by 1592 there were 29, or 28 per cent, including four bachelors of divinity.⁹² Standards among non-graduates improved also. During the 1560s Downham had ordained at least 56 deacons to the priesthood who were thought to be unsatisfactory,⁹³ but in 1592 as many as 29 non-graduate ministers were preachers, most of the remainder were able to perform their other duties satisfactorily, and only seven of the 108 Cheshire clergy of that year were singled out as unlearned.⁹⁴ As educational standards improved so did the behaviour of Cheshire clergy, so that by the 1590s the negligence that had been found in some parishes in 1578 had disappeared, and the clerical faults that were detected were more often of a trivial nature.⁹⁵ Chadderton deserves some credit for the changes. His ordination policy certainly played a part in improving standards, as did his own employment of graduates.⁹⁶ Moreover, most of his visitation articles of 1581 and of succeeding visitors' enquiries related to the behaviour and performance of the clergy,⁹⁷ and he was known to favour the preferment of able preaching ministers,⁹⁸ to have tried to reduce the number of incumbents who were non-resident, and to have issued detailed instructions to his clergy.⁹⁹

Contemporary evidence, however, shows how limited Chadderton's achievements were. At the end of his episcopate his diocese was thought by one harsh critic to be in a deplorable condition.¹ It certainly contained on various estimates between a quarter and a third of all recusants in the country,² and the bishop and his officers

⁸⁸ Ibid. 149; Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 65–9; *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 4–6.

⁸⁹ *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 9–12; Hist. MSS. Com. 35, 14th Rep. IV, *Kenyon*, 600–1; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/9–11; York, Borthwick Inst., III/V. 1590–1, CB2–3.

⁹⁰ Below, Protestant Nonconformity.

⁹¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 239; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/3, ff. 2–35.

⁹² York, Borthwick Inst., III/V. 1578–9, CB2, rolls D, E, G, H, J, L; Lamb. Pal. Libr., C.M. XIII/47, ff. 1–7.

⁹³ Above.

⁹⁴ Lamb. Pal. Libr., C.M. XIII/47, ff. 1–7.

⁹⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/10, ff. 18–113; York, Borthwick Inst., III/V. 1578–9, CB3, ff. 3–32v.

⁹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, ff. 2–22.

⁹⁷ W. P. M. Kennedy, *Eliz. Episc. Administration*, ii, pp. 110–23; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/6–11.

⁹⁸ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, 128.

⁹⁹ Hist. MSS. Com. 35, 14th Rep. IV, *Kenyon*, 600–1.

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1591–4, 158–9.

² R. G. Usher, *Reconstruction of Eng. Ch.* 1. 158; P.R.O., SP 14/9, no. 28.

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both recognized their inability to detect and punish more than a handful of them.³ By then, some parts of the diocese, especially in the Manchester area, had gained a reputation for intractable nonconformity,⁴ church fabrics were still generally in a poor condition, and many churches lacked service books and devotional literature.⁵ Moreover, although the education and behaviour of the clergy had improved, there was room for further improvements, and, as he lamented, the 'best sort' of incumbents were often non-resident, and the diocese still depended greatly upon poorly paid vicars and curates.⁶

In 1595 Chadderton was translated to Lincoln and was succeeded at Chester by Hugh Bellot, bishop of Bangor since 1586. A Cheshire man, Bellot did not long survive the move, dying in June 1596, probably at Wrexham. One of the few recorded acts of his short episcopate was the collation of his brother Cuthbert to the archdeaconry of Chester. He was reported to have been strict with recusants but no evidence of this survives. He was succeeded after a year long vacancy by his successor at Bangor, Richard Vaughan, a native of Carnarvonshire and one of the translators, with Dr. William Morgan, of the bible into Welsh.⁷ A man of Calvinist leanings, Vaughan continued Chadderton's harrying of recusants, especially in Lancashire.⁸ From the early 1590s, however, episcopal and archiepiscopal visitations had come to play a smaller and the lay authorities a larger role in the repression of recusancy,⁹ and the records of his three visitations of the diocese in 1598, 1601, and 1604 reveal little concerted action against recusants.¹⁰ Despite this and the fact that their numbers clearly increased, he unrealistically claimed in 1604 that he had converted many to the established church.¹¹

He had as little success in making the puritan clergy of his diocese conform. Until the issue of the new canons of 1604 he continued to use puritan ministers in the struggle against recusancy and accordingly to show them some measure of toleration. He appointed Richard Midgeley, a leading puritan divine, to one of the Queen's preacherships in Lancashire in 1599, for example, and in 1601, although threatening to deprive those who would not wear surplices, he did not proceed against them.¹² Under his forbearance the number of puritan ministers in Cheshire grew. In 1592 Chadderton's visitors had detected only five, in 1598 there were apparently at least seven, and in 1604 at least 12, by which time the visitors saw clear signs of a significant spread of puritan attitudes among the laity.¹³ After the issue of the canons of 1604 Vaughan proceeded more vigorously if still with forbearance. He cited variously 21 Lancashire and 12 Cheshire ministers before him at Aldford Hall where he had taken up residence while Chester was infected by the plague, and warned them to conform to the canons or face deprivation, but he gave them time to consider their position. Shortly afterwards he was translated to London, and only a handful of priests were deprived by his successor.¹⁴

Although the authorities were having growing difficulties with puritan ministers,

³ P.R.O., E 134/25 Trinity 5, mm. 1-11; SP 12/235, f. 146; 12/167/40; 12/143, f. 32; B. L. Lansd. MS. 8, f. 21; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 269-78.

⁴ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 295-315.

⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/10, ff. 18-113; York, Borthwick Inst., III/V. 1595-6, CB2-3.

⁶ P.R.O., SP 12/189/12.

⁷ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 150-2; D.N.B.; 3 *Sheaf*, xiv, pp. 38-9; Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 117; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, f. 24.

⁸ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 282-5, 328-31; *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1598-1601, 7-8, 14-15.

⁹ Wark, *Eliz. Recusancy in Ches.* 114-16.

¹⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/12-13.

¹¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 277-8; 3 *Sheaf*, xii, p. 46; P.R.O., SP 14/9, no. 28.

¹² Ches. R.O., EDV 1/12b; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 300, 304.

¹³ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/12-13, 10; Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 123.

¹⁴ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 304-5; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 154-5; Usher, *Reconstruction of Ch.* i. 250-6.

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the standards of the clergy apparently continued in general to improve. The number of preachers in the diocese declined from 172 in 1592 to 161 in 1603 but the number of graduates increased in the same period as did the number of graduates who were preachers.¹⁵ Improvements were most marked in Cheshire. During Chadderton's episcopate one in eight of the beneficed priests in the county was a graduate, an improvement on earlier decades; during Vaughan's the proportion was as high as 13 out of 29. Moreover, if the visitation returns are to be believed, the number of churches with non-resident incumbents or curates in charge in the county declined from 15 per cent in 1592 to 11 per cent in 1598 and 5 per cent in 1604, the number of parishes which had no adequate sermons shrank from 18 per cent in 1592 to 14 per cent in 1604, and the number of churches whose clergy caused the visitors concern in other ways declined from 54 per cent in 1592 to 25 per cent in 1604. Such changes may only reflect different standards of judgement, of course, but it seems probable that the improvements did take place,¹⁶ as Vaughan's visitors were reasonably thorough. It is not easy to establish what part the bishop played. Vaughan in 1599 secured the promised four Lancashire preacherships at the large stipend of £50 each, and in 1603 obtained the appointment of a King's preacher for Macclesfield.¹⁷ He also continued Chadderton's careful ordination policy. He favoured the promotion of local men because he thought them better able to deal with the people 'in cases relating to their souls and consciences'.¹⁸ His own patronage, however, remained small. During a seven-year episcopate he beneficed a mere three priests in Cheshire.¹⁹

His direct influence upon the upkeep of Cheshire churches was also limited, since he was rector of only eight and the responsibility for repairs in most of them had been assigned to the lessees.²⁰ He paid for repairs to Chester cathedral, however, was involved in depriving the master of St. John's hospital, Chester, for wasting its resources, and in 1602 asked for a report from the dean of Wirral on the condition of the chancels of Wirral churches.²¹ The improvement in the condition of some Cheshire churches between 1592 and 1604 may accordingly have owed something to him.²²

Whatever the extent of episcopal efforts over the clergy or church fabric, the major preoccupation of the bishop and his officers was, as it had been at the start of Elizabeth's reign, the sexual morals of his flock. Many visitation returns during Vaughan's episcopate, as hitherto, related to sexual or matrimonial offences, and most *ex officio* cases dealt with by the consistory court at Chester were of a similar nature.²³ A report to the archbishop of York about an incestuous marriage, the recording of a lengthy note about a similar case dealt with by the bishop in a consistory court book, and his trial and punishment of a number of offenders, all show Vaughan's own concern about, and involvement in, the correction of morals.²⁴

On Vaughan's translation in 1604 George Lloyd, bishop of Man since 1600, succeeded. A one-time King's Scholar at Chester, divinity lecturer in the cathedral from 1594, and rector of Heswall since 1597, he also had family connexions in the city.²⁵ He was, therefore, the sixth of the first eight bishops of Chester who was

¹⁵ Lamb. Pal. Libr., CM. XIII/47, ff. 1-7; B.L. Harl. MS. 280, f. 171v.; Usher, *Reconstruction of Ch.* i. 241-2.

¹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, ff. 2-39; EDV 1/10, ff. 18-113; EDV 1/12a, ff. 1-78v.; EDV 1/13, ff. 1-61.

¹⁷ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1598-1601, 14-15, 153; 3 *Sheaf.* xxxiii, p. 47; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 243.

¹⁸ Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 64 n.

¹⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, ff. 26-39.

²⁰ *Ibid.* EDA 3/1, ff. 50, 98, 128, 155-96.

²¹ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 86; 3 *Sheaf.* xiii, pp. 7-8; xxi, p. 48.

²² Ches. R.O., EDV 1/10, ff. 18-113; EDV 1/13, ff. 1-61.

²³ *Ibid.* EDV 1/12-13; EDC 1/33.

²⁴ 1 *Sheaf.* ii, pp. 212-13; Ches. R.O., EDC 1/33 *sub* 25 Sept. 1604.

²⁵ D.N.B.; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 156; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, f. 27; 2 *Sheaf.* i, p. 90; iii, pp. 57, 59.

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either a native of the archdeaconry of Chester or had had close personal connexions with it. Such a record may indicate governmental awareness of a need for local knowledge in the administration of the diocese, a need, as Bishop Vaughan put it, of being 'well acquainted with the nature and manners of the people'.²⁶ It might alternatively indicate no more than the stereotyped nature of government thinking, especially since three of Lloyd's predecessors received their promotion to the see of Chester from that of Bangor.

The first year of Lloyd's episcopate witnessed the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot and widespread concern, shared by the bishop, about the loyalty of Roman Catholics. Once the initial furore had died down, however, he soon became less certain how he should treat the recusants of his diocese, and in October 1608 received instructions from the Council insisting that action against them should not be stopped entirely, but that proceedings should be undertaken with moderation and only against the most obstinate. His uncertainty evidently remained, however, since he continued to ask for advice about recusant matters.²⁷ Much of the work of enforcing the penal legislation against recusants was now, of course, undertaken by the civil authorities,²⁸ but the correction of Puritan excesses remained very largely in episcopal hands, and Lloyd showed great mildness in his dealings with puritan clergy. He had removed ministers at Blackburn and Rochdale (Lancs.) in 1606, but he allowed Nicholas Byfield, a leading puritan preacher, to remain at St. Peter's, Chester, for many years, and even joined him in preaching on one occasion. He permitted another puritan who had been deprived at Northampton to preach in the diocese, and countenanced the activities of puritan ministers or preachers at Great Budworth, where the vicar, Richard Eaton, caused disturbances by his preaching, at Bunbury, where the Haberdashers' Company of London had installed a puritan preacher and curate, and at Astbury, Barthomley, Mobberley, and Guilden Sutton.²⁹ He also showed leniency to other offenders against ecclesiastical law. In 1606, for example, he decided that a parishioner of Tilston who had looked after the mother of an illegitimate child during her pregnancy should not be troubled by the courts; in 1608 he sent his chaplain to preach at Tarporley because the rector had failed to do so; in 1610 he dismissed charges against the curate of Witton after what appears an unsatisfactory explanation of his behaviour; and in 1614 he relieved the Chester parish of St. Martin from the obligation of providing certain service books because of its poverty.³⁰

Although a mild and saintly man, a good preacher, and a permanent resident in his diocese either at Chester, at Thornton le Moors, where he held the rectory *in commendam*, or at Manchester, where he rented a house,³¹ Lloyd was not a good administrator and his leniency was not conducive to good order. He renewed the struggle with certain rural deans over jurisdiction, and presided in person at visitations of the cathedral and sessions of the consistory court,³² but his visitations although frequent were less thorough than those of his predecessors, and his officers less efficient.³³ Lloyd himself visited the diocese in 1605-6, 1608, 1611, and 1614,

²⁶ Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 64n.

²⁷ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1603-10, 463; 1611-18, 285; 3 *Sheaf*, iii, p. 60; J.C.A.S. N.S. x. 92; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 329.

²⁸ 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, pp. 83, 89, 92, 96; xix, p. 51.

²⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 304; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 157; 3 *Sheaf*, ix, pp. 42-3; Hist. MSS. Com. 35, 14th Rep. IV, Kenyon, 14; Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 28, 38, 128-9, 144, 185-6; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/15, ff. 45, 59v., 74v., 83v., 93v.;

EDV 1/17, f. 53; EDV 1/19, f. 40v.

³⁰ Ches. R.O., EDC 1/33; EDV 1/15, f. 19v.; EDV 1/19, f. 10v.

³¹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 227; J.C.A.S. N.S. x. 95-7; 3 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 57, 59-60, 62.

³² Ches. R.O., EDC 1/33; EDV 1/15, f. 204; EDV 1/17, ff. 1-2; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 233.

³³ For the rest of this paragraph, see Ches. R.O., EDV 1/14-19; York, Borthwick Inst., III/V. 1607 Chester; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 91.

his metropolitan came in 1607, and one rural dean, at least, is known to have visited his deanery in 1606, 1607, 1609, 1610, 1612, and 1613. Little effort, however, seems to have been made to extract adequate presentments and the information gathered from the parishes was therefore less detailed than hitherto. Moreover, even when faults were presented, the authorities often did little to correct them. The worst offenders were Hugh Burches and Robert King who were commissaries for the chancellor, David Yale. When Yale himself or the bishop presided, and they did not do so very often, stricter orders and instructions were given, although usually to little effect. Only the books and ornaments that churchwardens were supposed to provide were scrutinized with any care, to the exclusion of almost all else in 1614, but the same faults were detected year after year, so there was little improvement even there. Churchwardens, sworn men, and visitors alike were particularly inconsistent and negligent when dealing with the faults of the clergy. Some wardens presented faults only irregularly and others failed to present their erring clergy at all. The authorities, too, sometimes ignored the faults reported, as the Bunbury wardens complained in 1608.

Only eight out of thirty priests presented to Cheshire parish livings during Lloyd's episcopate were non-graduates, and fewer clergy than hitherto appear to have been involved in immoral or unpriestly behaviour, but the number of puritan ministers in the county continued to increase. At least 20 were detected at succeeding visitations, and there may well have been more. Church fabrics were still causing concern and in 1608 the bishop ordered the chapter of Chester to repair the chancels of their churches at Shotwick, Bromborough, Chelford, and Wervin, and his instructions were reissued in 1611.³⁴ Lloyd's episcopate also saw some of the first attempts to beautify the insides of Cheshire churches by removing the rushes that had hitherto been strewn on floors and by constructing uniform seats. Steps were taken in that direction at St. Oswald's, Chester, and at Tarporley, Taxal, and Marbury.³⁵ In addition the right of certain families to private chapels or oratories in their parish churches was confirmed by Lloyd at Church Hulme, Coppenhall, Bunbury, Sandbach, and Nether Peover.³⁶ Finally, his episcopate also saw the start of long and acrimonious disputes between the bishop, the corporation, and the cathedral over their respective rights in Chester city.³⁷

Lloyd died in 1615, and George Massie, rector of Wigan and yet another Cheshire man, who was appointed his successor, died before consecration. The see then passed to Thomas Morton, a leading Anglican apologist. Morton, a former chaplain to the earl of Huntingdon, became a royal chaplain and dean of Gloucester in 1606 and was transferred to Winchester in 1609, where the prebendaries considered him the best dean there had been in their time. He held successively the sees of Chester, Lichfield, and Durham, the first *in commendam* with Stockport rectory, and was remembered by Clarendon as one 'of the less formal and more popular prelates'. It may have been the success of his *Apologia Catholica*, a defence of the Church of England against Rome first published in 1605, which suggested his promotion to Chester, the most Catholic of dioceses, but much of his short episcopate was taken up with attempts to bring its nonconforming clergy to obedience, after the leniency shown them by his predecessor.³⁸ One of his earliest actions was to cite before him

³⁴ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, ff. 39–59; EDV 1/14, ff. 11–84; EDV 1/15, ff. 4–97; EDV 1/17, ff. 1–95; EDV 1/19, ff. 6–62v.

³⁵ Ches. R.O., EDP 263/5; EDA 2/2, ff. 293v.–294v., 320; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 157.

³⁶ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/2, ff. 300–2, 305v.–308; J.C.A.S. N.S. XXXV(1), 13.

³⁷ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 87–8; 3 *Sheaf*, xxiii, p. 72; B.L.

Harl, MS. 2103.

³⁸ D.N.B.; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 178–9; J. P. Earwaker, *E. Ches.* i. 384–5; John Barwick, *A Summarie Acct. of the Holy Life and Happy Death of the Rt. Revd. Father in God, Thomas, Late Lord Bp. of Duresme* (London, 1660), 61–77.

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the leading puritan clergy of his diocese led by William Hinde, vicar of Bunbury, and to demand an explanation of their opposition to the ceremonies of the established church. He was, however, unable to change their attitudes towards the wearing of surplices, the sign of the cross in baptism, and kneeling at the communion, and so was forced to proceed against some of them at his primary visitation.³⁹ He also published in 1618 a relation of his conference with the puritans entitled *A Defence of the Innocence of the Three Ceremonies of the Church of England*. It was prefaced by an 'Epistle to Nonconformists' which exhorted obedience in the strongest terms. Many of the leading divines, however, retained the support and protection of their patrons among the local gentry so he had little success in obtaining obedience.⁴⁰

Morton was also the author of James I's controversial *Declaration of Sports*, which was issued for Lancashire in 1617, but not for the whole country until the following year. The declaration, which permitted certain specified games and recreations on Sundays and holy days, had three aims: to weaken the Roman Catholic claim that the reformed religion was joyless, to stop games during service time, and to undermine the authority of the puritan preachers by attacking their sabbatarianism. Morton played a large part in the enforcement of the declaration and compiled an amplifying order which accompanied it. He was also authorized by the Crown to take 'straight order with all the puritans and precisians' in his diocese to make them conform to its provisions. He was, however, translated to Lichfield in 1619, before any serious persecutions could be started, and was replaced by John Bridgeman who initially was more lenient towards puritans.⁴¹

Bridgeman came to episcopal preferment through traditional channels. After a distinguished university career, he became chaplain to Thomas Dove, bishop of Peterborough, and in 1605 was made a royal chaplain. In the next decade he received many ecclesiastical offices of profit and responsibility, and was from 1611 a frequent preacher at court. In 1616 he was presented by the Crown to the wealthy rectory of Wigan (Lancs.) and, although first promised the bishopric of Chichester, was, in 1619, nominated to that of Chester. He was allowed to retain Wigan rectory, worth over £700 a year, and prebendal stalls at Exeter and Lichfield *in commendam*, and, therefore, brought to the diocese what his predecessors had lacked, a substantial income from other preferments.⁴² An energetic and able administrator, mindful of royal and Laudian instructions, he greatly improved his diocese.

Bridgeman's most obvious improvements were in the financial administration of the see. When he came to Chester he found that there were no charters, registers, or rentals relating to its revenues. He had all the leases and grants that could be found copied, lists of taxes due and of procurations, pensions, and synodals compiled, and detailed accounts made of his episcopal income year by year. He also repaired part of the palace and created a record office there. Those actions were fundamental to the administration of the see's finances during the next 150 years, and resulted in Bridgeman's discovery that he was not receiving much that was his due. In 1624 he enforced the payment of a pension, unpaid since 1607, from Preston (Lancs.) rectory, and sued some of the tenants of St. Bee's (Cumb.) for unpaid rents. In 1626

³⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/19, ff. 160v.-3, 173v., 187, 191v., 199, 203, 214v.; *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 15-16.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 21, 24, 125; *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 13-14; Barwick, *Life of Bp. of Duresme*, 78-9.

⁴¹ *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 15-16; Barwick,

Life of Bp. of Duresme, 79-83; J. Tait, 'Declaration of Sports for Lancs.', *E.H.R.* xxxii. 561-8; E. Axon, *Manchester Sessions* (R.S.L.C. xlii), pp. xxiii-xxvii.

⁴² D.N.B.; *Ches. Hist.* vi. 25-7; *Palatine Note Bk.* iii. 1-4; G. T. O. Bridgeman, *Hist of Ch. and Manor of Wigan*, ii (Chetham Soc. N.S. xvi), 181-7, 236-7.

he forced the warden of Manchester college to pay arrears of procurations and synodals. He regained other dues and fees at Bidston, Brigham, and Aysgarth (Yorks.), and in the archdeaconry of Richmond. He also discovered that he was not bound to pay subsidies on five of his rectories.⁴³

Bridgeman sought to enhance his income and cut his outgoings. He increased the rent paid for the lease of the tithes of Little Budworth from 10s. to £1 when the lease fell in in 1622, and between 1624 and 1629 negotiated agreements by which the payment of all or part of the stipends of the vicars of six of his appropriations was transferred to the farmers. In addition he demanded far higher entry fines for new leases than had his predecessors or than his successors were to do in the period 1660–1708.⁴⁴ Between 1620 and 1640, for example, he took a total of nearly £2,500 in fines or an average of about £125 a year.⁴⁵ He also stopped paying salaries to the chancellor and commissary of Richmond, but his major scheme for cutting expenditure, which was to have consequences for the spiritual administration of the diocese, involved a reorganization of the rural deaneries. As the patents of the deaneries in the archdeaconry of Chester fell in, he increased their rents substantially and granted them to the two archdeacons. In 1635 six of the eight Cheshire and Flintshire deaneries were granted to George Snell, the archdeacon of Chester, who already held a seventh, and their rents were increased to £50 which cancelled out the stipend hitherto paid to archdeacons by the bishop. At the same time the deaneries of Warrington, Leyland, and Blackburn (Lancs.) were granted on the same terms to the archdeacon of Richmond thus saving another £50 stipend. Bridgeman originally planned to keep the deaneries of Manchester and Amounderness for his chaplains, and to increase the Richmond deanery rents in a similar way, in which case his total annual profit would have been £107, but nothing came of these later plans, and his profit instead amounted to a little over £80.⁴⁶

Finally, Bridgeman also recognized his successors' needs in his plan to annex the rectory at Ribchester (Lancs.) to the see. He refused an offer of a large fine to renew the lease in 1622, intending to wait until the lease fell in and then to augment the vicarage and to assign the remainder of the profits to the see. In 1632, with Laud's help, he secured an order from the king that the annexation should take place when the lease expired regardless of who was then bishop, but the Civil War intervened and in 1661 Bishop Walton leased Ribchester to one of his officers, albeit in trust for his wife and son. In 1639 an even more ambitious scheme for augmenting the see was advanced by Laud. He suggested that Wigan rectory should be annexed to it instead of Ribchester, but little money had been raised for the purchase of the advowson when the Scottish war intervened.⁴⁷

Bridgeman's efforts at enhancing his revenues and his similar conduct as rector of Wigan gained him a local reputation for greed and some influential enemies. In 1633 two priests, whom the bishop had deprived, accused him of misappropriating ecclesiastical commission fines and sums raised by commuting penances, and came forward as witnesses to his rapacity. Although the main charges proved unfounded and one of the king's secretaries thought Bridgeman 'guilty of formalities only', some disquieting evidence of nepotism was uncovered during the investigations, and

⁴³ Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 130v.–1; Chester Cath. Libr., Bridgeman Account Bk.; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/3/1; D. 1287/19/3; D. 1287/4/1; *Continuity and Change*, 161.

⁴⁴ *Continuity and Change*, 161–2.

⁴⁵ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/3/1, pp. 153–222.

⁴⁶ Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 130v.–131; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 28–9; *Continuity and Change*, 159–60, 164.

⁴⁷ Ches. R.O., EDA 3/1, ff. 130v.–1; EDA 2/2, ff. 374–5; Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 415–19; *Continuity and Change*, 163.

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that prompted the king and Laud to prevent the bishop from appointing one of his sons as diocesan chancellor.⁴⁸

During the early years of his episcopate Bridgeman was less involved with the spiritual administration of his diocese than with its finances. He chose to reside at Wigan and later at Great Lever (Lancs.) where he bought an estate in 1629, rather than at Chester, where he found the palace unhealthy, because of the 'smoke and other annoyances' created by a brewery in the close.⁴⁹ While he remained preoccupied with affairs at Wigan the administration of the diocese was left largely to his officers at Chester, and notably to David Yale, his chancellor. Yale, however, was elderly by 1619, having been chancellor since 1587, and was unfit to proceed with vigour against nonconforming clergy or lazy churchwardens. Since he presided unaided in the consistory court until Thomas Stafford was appointed as his substitute in 1622, and was responsible until his retirement in 1624, for the issuing of licences and caveats in the archdeaconry of Chester and for undertaking episcopal visitations and the resulting correction of offenders, it is not surprising that little was achieved in these years.⁵⁰ His office proceedings in the consistory court only involved the correction of sexual offenders, and the visitations that he undertook for the bishop in 1619 and 1622 were perfunctory. In 1619, for example, his single concern was the failure of churchwardens to levy 12*d.* of those who were absent from church. He only extracted presentments from 70 Cheshire churches and few of these were adequate, for evidence of puritan practices was detected in only five churches, and of fabric faults in only eight. Bishop Morton's enquiries and later visitations show both these figures to have been far too low. In 1622 he was slightly more thorough and evidence was eventually extracted from 106 churches in Cheshire, but his main concerns in that year, the provision of homily books and the levying of 12*d.* fines, were peripheral to the real problems of the county's churches.⁵¹

By 1623, however, Stafford, who became chancellor in 1624, and the bishop himself were controlling affairs. Bridgeman visited Chester cathedral in 1623 and issued detailed injunctions to the chapter, which were later to be reissued by Bishops Cartwright and Stratford in 1687 and 1692.⁵² In the same month he tried a case in the consistory court which involved a former vicar of Great Budworth, and in the summer of 1626, if not before, he began holding an audience court at Wigan at which he corrected offenders, granted probates and absolutions, and issued licences, caveats, and sequestrations. Most, though not all, of the business came from Lancashire or the archdeaconry of Richmond, while the chancellor, to whom the bishop paid over any fees he had collected, dealt with Cheshire. This arrangement overcame some of the difficulties that had hitherto been experienced in the administration of so large a diocese, but it had disadvantages, not least the duplication of record keeping that it involved, and it was discontinued when Bridgeman came to live at Chester, probably in 1630.⁵³

Stafford had visited the diocese in 1625 and had been more successful than his predecessor in extracting evidence about puritan activities,⁵⁴ but both he and the bishop remained lenient with nonconforming clergy. Bridgeman's wife was friendly with John Angier, the puritan preacher at Ringley (Lancs.), and the bishop showed

⁴⁸ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2; *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1631-3, 578-9, 583-4; 1633-4, 7-8, 10-11, 16, 38-40, 51-7, 66, 75-9, 97-8, 108, 121, 133, 145-6, 174, 274, 291; Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 340-63; *Continuity and Change*, 164.

⁴⁹ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 332-3, 406.

⁵⁰ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 21; Ches. R.O., EDC 1/50; EDC 4/1; EDV 1/22-4; EDA 2/2, ff. 354-5.

⁵¹ Ches. R.O., EDC 1/50; EDV 1/22, ff. 1-68; EDV 1/24, ff. 1-95.

⁵² *Ibid.* EDA 3/1, ff. 254v.-255v.; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 98-102.

⁵³ Ches. R.O., EDA 3/2; Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 332-3.

⁵⁴ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/26, ff. 1-90v.

him consideration as a result. In addition he is known to have favoured John Ley, the vicar of Great Budworth and subdean of Chester, and Samuel Eaton, the preacher at West Kirby, whom he allowed to share in celebrating a monthly communion in that parish.⁵⁵ In 1633 Archbishop Neile tried to explain this leniency to the King by arguing that bishops of Chester sought to recover them to the church by mildness lest 'by carrying a severer hand upon the puritans than they had power to carry upon the papists', the latter might 'take heart and opinion of favour'. The King, however, was unimpressed and commented that 'the neglect of punishing puritans breeds papists'.⁵⁶ He also thereafter supported Neile in requiring a stricter line with nonconformists from Bridgeman.⁵⁷

Although the puritan faction among the clergy of Cheshire were regularly detected at visitations from the mid 1620s, and were being harried from the early 1630s, the authorities, until Neile's great metropolitan visitation of 1633, found little else to complain of about the behaviour of the county clergy. In 1619 a few incumbents were found to have neglected repairs and ale was being sold at West Kirby rectory; in 1622 a handful were failing to preach as they ought; in 1625 others were neglecting the catechism and the curate of Bromborough was thought to be a drunkard; in 1629 the licences of a number of curates and preachers were in question. Nevertheless, clerical standards had clearly improved since the early years of the century.⁵⁸ Very few non-graduates were now employed in the county, and some lectureships had been established to fulfil the needs of outlying chapelries and to supply the wants of non-preaching incumbents. Lecturers were employed in 1622 at St. Mary's, Chester, Shotwick, Bunbury, Wrenbury, Weaverham, Leigh, Whitley, Bowdon, Knutsford, Thelwall, Holmes Chapel, Over, Middlewich, Stockport, Norbury, Macclesfield, Chelford, and Congleton.⁵⁹

Bridgeman took greater interest in administering his diocese from the mid 1620s, but the real change in efficiency and direction did not come until 1629–34 and was imposed from outside the diocese by the King and by Archbishops Harsnett and Neile of York and Laud of Canterbury. The start of this process was Harsnett's metropolitan visitation of 1629, which Bridgeman apparently resisted.⁶⁰ The archbishop's officers proceeded with vigour against unlicensed preachers and against churchwardens who did not make adequate presentments, for the first time took special interest in the services and clergy of the large number of outlying chapels in the county, and took the unusual step of threatening the wardens of some twenty-two Cheshire churches and chapels with an interdict unless they put their affairs in order. Their enquiries revealed how many recusants remained in the south-west of the county, and showed the considerable support that puritan preachers were receiving in the north. Conventicles were discovered at Shotwick and Whitley, puritan clergy and parishioners were prosecuted from the parishes of Great Budworth, Runcorn, Grappenhall, Eastham, Swettenham, and Goostrey, and at Knutsford, and Samuel Eaton was proceeded against for unlicensed preaching in the Wirral peninsula.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 113; D.N.B.; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 117–20; 3 *Sheaf.* vi, p. 96.

⁵⁶ *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 22–3; P.R.O., SP 16/259/78.

⁵⁷ Below.

⁵⁸ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/22, ff. 1–68; EDV 1/24, ff. 1–87v.; EDV 1/26, ff. 1–90v.; York, Borthwick Inst. III/V. 1629–30, CB Chester, ff. 136–208v.

⁵⁹ *Loans, Contributions, Subsidies, and Ship Money in Dioc. of Chester* (R.S.L.C. xii), 50–80; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4, ff. 70–119v.; EDA 1/5.

⁶⁰ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2; *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1627–8, 116.

⁶¹ York, Borthwick Inst. III/V. 1629–30, CB Chester, ff. 136–208v.

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During 1629 the King issued to the bishops, through the archbishop of Canterbury, instructions aimed at tightening up the administration of their dioceses. They were required to reside in the city of their episcopal see, to take great care over the issuing of licences to lecturers and to check upon their subsequent behaviour, to ensure that services were read according to the prayer book, and to report to the King each January what they had done in these matters.⁶² The result of the instructions and of Harsnett's visitation was that far greater pressure was put upon Bridgeman to bring his diocese to order. He was, at first, through the intervention of Lord Wentworth, allowed to remain at Wigan provided that he went to Chester for the Christmas festivities, but from 1630 he lived at Chester or at Great Lever. In 1630 Harsnett wrote to him demanding a report on his dealings with the lecturers of his diocese and his fulfilment of the other royal instructions, and stated that he wished to show the King that he did not 'slumber in this royal and religious work'. Despite this prompting the bishop's response was slow, possibly because he hoped during 1631 to obtain a better endowed bishopric.⁶³ Nonetheless he took steps to correct parishioners at Bunbury in 1629, followed up some of Harsnett's complaints in a visitation in the summer of 1630, and showed some concern over abuses at Manchester college in 1632. He also started to impose a new form of penance for sexual offenders in this period and to require higher fees for commutations, and was partly responsible in 1633-4 for the final clearing up of the case of the Pendle (Lancs.) witches.⁶⁴

He only began to act with determination, however, after 1633. Archbishop Neile's visitation articles of that year were aimed primarily at extracting information about puritans and about the condition of churches,⁶⁵ and his visitors concentrated upon the same subjects.⁶⁶ The presentments received from a quarter of the 108 churches and chapels in Cheshire were thought by them to be inadequate, and they recommended the punishment of lax churchwardens. They made thorough and independent enquiries which powerfully supplemented the presentments and justified their belief in the latter's inadequacy. According to the high standards set by Neile, Laud, and the King, conditions in the county were bad. Two-thirds of Cheshire churches needed repairs or 'beautifying' and Neile reported to the king that most churches were 'very miserable', 'ruinous', and kept 'sordidly'. Even the few well repaired churches, such as that at Nantwich, were disfigured by an excess of galleries and pews. Over half were unpaved. Nearly 60 per cent of churches also reported some neglect in the performance of public prayers, 'as if', as Neile put it, 'all religion were but in a sermon', and lecturers, especially in Chester, were singled out for their neglect of services. Most concern in reports made after the visitation, however, was shown about the puritans, evidence of whose activities was found in about fifty parishes or chapelries. Chester was thought to be 'full of puritans and disorderly people', as were the Frodsham and the Nantwich and Bunbury areas, and at Bunbury itself both the curate and the preacher, known nonconformists, were suspended by the visitors. Neile complained that the prayer book was neglected and abused in most places and 'new-fangled catechisms' used. The disrespect shown by ministers to the public prayers of the church had 'bred such irreverence in the people' that they refused to kneel to receive the sacrament, and many priests neglected or

⁶² Ches. R.O., EDA 2/2, ff. 377v.-8.

⁶³ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 332-5; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2.

⁶⁴ B. L. Harl. MS. 1994, ff. 120-1; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/31b; Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 363, 374; *Continuity and*

Change, 164.

⁶⁵ *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 16-18.

⁶⁶ For what follows, see York, Borthwick Inst., III/V. 1633, CB2A-B; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/9/8; Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 367-72.

refused to wear a surplice. The visitors also reported the presence of many recusants in the diocese.

Such a thorough visitation, which revealed the inadequacies of episcopal efforts, as it did in the diocese of Carlisle, was not welcomed by Bishops Bridgeman or Potter, who went to some trouble to discredit the visitors by accusing them of extracting excessive fees. Bridgeman also tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the archbishop's officers from correcting offenders presented at the visitation after his inhibition had been relaxed.⁶⁷ Despite such obstructiveness, however, he subsequently showed much more energy in attacking abuses. That may have been a result of the growing interest shown in the diocese by Archbishop Laud, to whom the bishop acknowledged in 1636 he was much indebted for his 'great care' of his clergy, and by the king who was reported to be 'moved to hear how ruinous' the churches and chapels of the diocese were.⁶⁸ The bishop's greatest success was achieved with church fabrics. The process of paving churches and of making their seats a uniform size had begun in the diocese of Chester earlier in the century, Bridgeman himself already having dealt with the seating problems at Stockport in 1620, at St. Oswald's, Chester, in 1620 and 1624, at Holmes Chapel in 1627, and at Nantwich and St. Mary's, Chester, in 1631,⁶⁹ but the process did not begin in earnest until the archiepiscopal and episcopal visitations of 1633 and 1634. The visitors of 1633 made several orders about seating, notably at Nantwich and Astbury,⁷⁰ and Bridgeman continued the work. He tried at first to separate the men and women when reorganizing seats, but was dissuaded from this by Neile who thought that it would beget an unendurable number of 'brabbles', lawsuits and prohibitions.⁷¹ His visitation articles of 1634 included a number of questions about church fabrics and his visitors appear to have concentrated their enquiries upon repairs, seating, and flagging of churches. They found that in the autumn of 1634 there were still many churches in the county unpaved or without uniform seats, and others in urgent need of repairs.⁷² They gave specific orders about seats at St. Michael's, Chester, at Great Budworth, at Woodchurch, and at Wallasey, and gave more general instructions about changes elsewhere, especially in the Middlewich-Sandbach area.⁷³ Their efforts continued in the following spring when most of the archdeaconry of Chester was revisited, and proceedings were taken in the consistory court against the churchwardens of Marbury, Warmincham, Sandbach, and Over, and during 1636 when further action was taken against the wardens of Over Peover, Rostherne, and Stockport.⁷⁴ The bishop himself was also involved in enforcing improvements. He viewed in person the dilapidations at Waverton church in 1635, assigned new seats to parishioners at Davenham in 1635 and at Backford in 1636, and became involved in correspondence over seats at Woodchurch in 1634, at Wrenbury in 1635, and at Acton in 1636.⁷⁵ Finally, in 1639 the seats at Over Peover were reorganized according to his instructions, by which time other improvements had been made at St. John's and St. Peter's, Chester, Frodsham, Prestbury, Tilston, Congleton, and

⁶⁷ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 377–80; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2; D. 1287/9/8.

⁶⁸ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2; D. 1287/9/8. For Laud's interference in the dioc., see *ibid.*; *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1635–6, 157; 1638–9, 80, 141, 523–4; 1641–3, 536–7; 1 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 9–10.

⁶⁹ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2; Ches. R.O., DBE 30, p. 74; P 29/7/1, ff. 33, 306; P 20/13/1; EDP 254/5; EDA 2/2, f. 364; EDA 3/2, f. 15.

⁷⁰ Ches. R.O., EDP 200/5; EDC 5/1663, no. 4; Staffs.

R.O., D. 1287/9/8.

⁷¹ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 377–8.

⁷² *Articles . . . Dioc. of Chester* (London, 1634); Ches. R.O., EDV 1/33, ff. 1–13; EDV 1/32, ff. 19–95v.

⁷³ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/32, ff. 19–95v.; B.L. Harl. MS. 2103, ff. 29, 193; 3 *Sheaf*, li, p. 19; *T.H.S.L.C.* xliii. 62.

⁷⁴ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/32, ff. 1–15; EDC 1/52.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* P 6/6/1; P 32/8/1; 3 *Sheaf*, li, p. 19; B.L. Harl. MS. 2103, f. 60; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2.

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Middlewich.⁷⁶ Bridgeman's boast, therefore, in his report on conditions in his diocese in January 1637 that most of its churches had been made uniform, 'beautified', and repaired, and that the laity had spent many thousands of pounds upon repairs does not seem extravagant.⁷⁷ The changes were not achieved without disputes. In 1637 alone cases were proceeding through the consistory court about seats at Barthomley, Rostherne, Ashton on Mersey, Acton, Marbury, and Barrow,⁷⁸ and changes at Acton and Wrenbury were resisted by influential local landowners.⁷⁹ The seating in Chester cathedral for the parishioners of St. Oswald's was also a major cause of disputes between the chapter, the corporation, and the bishop, which disrupted the religious life of the city during the 1620s and 1630s.⁸⁰

Bridgeman was less enthusiastic about prosecuting puritan clergy and attacking puritanism among the laity, but he tried to do his duty.⁸¹ Neile supervised the diocese through the Northern High Commission and Bridgeman's annual reports sent by him to the king, and expressly appointed a pursuivant to deal with Chester affairs. As a result prosecutions of nonconformists increased, and, despite an attempt to bribe the bishop,⁸² Bridgeman's officers took greater care both at visitation and in the consistory court. At the visitation of 1634, for example, they showed particular concern about laymen who refused to kneel at the communion, and continued to harry suspected clergy into the spring of 1635. The bishop himself also played a part in the correction of nonconforming clergy. The puritans, however, had been tolerated too long in the diocese for these efforts to have very much effect and the strength of puritan feeling in Cheshire was clearly shown in 1637 by the hero's welcome given in Chester and the neighbouring country to William Prynne, the propagandist, on his way to prison at Carnarvon. The severity with which his Cheshire friends were subsequently treated can have done little to remove puritan dislike of the episcopate. The strength and diversity of nonconformist opinion in the county became even clearer in the early 1640s when the restraining hand of episcopal authority had largely been removed by national events, and in August 1641 Parliament, recognizing the disorder that this was creating in Cheshire, ordered that only those services allowed by Act of Parliament should be performed in the churches of the county, and that incumbents and curates should not introduce any rites or ceremonies that gave offence.⁸³ Subsequent developments show what little effect this order had.⁸⁴

In his report on the 1633 visitation to the King, Archbishop Neile singled out as an extenuating circumstance for the failures of the bishops of Chester and Carlisle the difficulty of controlling 'inferior officers',⁸⁵ and it may have been with that difficulty in mind that Bridgeman reorganized ruridecanal jurisdiction. The deaneries in the archdeaconry of Chester were at first assigned by him to the two archdeacons, but they in turn, with the bishop's approval, assigned the jurisdiction to the chancellor who paid them each £50 a year in rent in return. In this way all jurisdiction in the archdeaconry was concentrated in the hands of the chancellor whom the bishop could more easily control. The arrangement worked well enough under Chancellor Mainwaring, but there remained the danger that the abolition of separate rural

⁷⁶ Ches. R.O., EDP 174/5; P 51/12/1; P 65/8/1; P 8/4/2; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxv(1), 14-20.

⁷⁷ Cal. S. P. Dom. 1636-7, 410.

⁷⁸ Ches. R.O., EDC 5/1637. Dr. J. Addy kindly supplied this reference.

⁷⁹ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2.

⁸⁰ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 104-6.

⁸¹ For what follows, see *Politics, Religion, and Eng. Civil War*, 16-33; Ches. R.O., EDC 1/52; EDV 1/32-3.

⁸² Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2.

⁸³ Ibid.; J.C.A.S. [1st ser.] pts. x-xi, 271-88; 2 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 9, 13, 32; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/2, ff. 373, 378-9.

⁸⁴ Below, Protestant Nonconformity.

⁸⁵ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 371.

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deans might make it difficult to enforce control locally. The Civil War intervened, however, before this danger could be realized.⁸⁶

After 1633 attempts were also made to ensure that the clergy took the required mid-week services and performed their other duties conscientiously.⁸⁷ In addition, in order to improve the value of livings Bridgeman was involved in plans to augment the vicarages at Leigh (Lancs.) and Rostherne, and to increase the stipends of curates in the parish of Whalley (Lancs.) out of the impropiator's profits.⁸⁸ Self help among the clergy in this period usually involved attempts often strongly resisited by parishioners to overthrow moduses.⁸⁹ An indication of the increase in such attempts during the 1630s and of the opposition they aroused is provided by the growth in the number of prohibitions issued out of the Chester Exchequer to stop proceedings in tithe suits. Between 1610 and 1629 the Exchequer issued six prohibitions against the Chester consistory court, of which only one related to tithes, but between 1630 and 1639 it issued thirty-nine, of which seventeen related to tithe suits.⁹⁰ The flood of prohibitions became so strong, in fact, that Bridgeman wrote to Laud about it, and the archbishop promised to take the matter up with the Attorney-General.⁹¹ Nevertheless it was not until the Interregnum that any large-scale attempt was made to provide adequate clerical incomes in the diocese. Even then the work of the Committee for Plundered Ministers and the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers was muddled and proved short-lived,⁹² so that it was only with the creation of Queen Anne's Bounty that any long-term improvements were made to the value of poor livings.

The war with Scotland and the summoning of Parliament curtailed episcopal improvements at Chester as elsewhere. During August 1641 there were sermons at Little Budworth, Barrow, Thornton le Moors, and Tarvin attacking episcopacy, and Bridgeman could do nothing about them.⁹³ In September 1642 he entertained the King and the Prince of Wales at Chester, but, having been fined £3,000 by Parliament, he fled the city in 1645 rather than face the rigours of a siege, and took up residence at Morton Hall near Oswestry (Salop.) where he died in 1652.⁹⁴ The diocesan administration collapsed before the siege, the last consistory court session taking place in December 1643, but a few presentations were made to the bishop until June 1649.⁹⁵ The palace at Chester with all Bridgeman's furniture, except his books, was sold by the Parliamentarians in 1650 for £1,059.⁹⁶

1660-1726

In the crucial two years immediately after the Restoration Chester was without strong episcopal guidance. Brian Walton, the first bishop, was consecrated late in 1660. He was a Laudian and a royalist, who had been ejected from his livings in 1641 on a charge of 'observing ceremonies', and his tenure of the see was brief; he made only one visit to Chester, in September 1661, and died soon afterwards on his return to London. Although he had been received in his cathedral city with great

⁸⁶ *Continuity and Change*, 159-60.

⁸⁷ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 392; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/32-3; EDC 1/52; P.R.O., SP 16/345485(i).

⁸⁸ C. Hill, *Economic Problems of Ch.* 329-30; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2.

⁸⁹ Ches. R.O., EDC 5/1636-8; EDC 1/54-60.

⁹⁰ P.R.O., CHES 38/27, nos. 1-49.

⁹¹ Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/18/2.

⁹² *Minutes of Committee for Plundered Ministers and of*

Trustees for Maintenance of Ministers relating to Lancs. and Ches. 1643-54 (R.S.L.C. xxviii), 145-230.

⁹³ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1641-3, 77.

⁹⁴ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 435, 439-41; Morris, *Ches-ter in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 190-1.

⁹⁵ Ches. R.O., EDC 1/63; EDC 4/1; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/9/8; Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 440.

⁹⁶ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, ii. 440; Staffs. R.O., D. 1287/4/1.

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ceremony, he had no time to conduct a visitation, and he left little mark on his diocese. The next episcopate, that of Henry Ferne, dean of Ely, was even more transitory, for Ferne died in 1662 only five weeks after his consecration. His successor, George Hall, a royal chaplain and son of a former bishop of Norwich, was consecrated in May 1662. Despite returning to a London parish in 1655, after being deprived of his benefices in 1644, he was a man of decided views, and during his five-year episcopate the diocese at last had an effective pastor.⁹⁷

The new bishops presided over a diocese which remained complex and unwieldy, with many large parishes and numerous independent and semi-dependent chapelries.⁹⁸ Pastoral arrangements were especially complex in the thinly populated regions in the east and centre of the county, where parishes were especially large and their numerous dependent chapels were of uncertain status and fluctuating existence, without dedication, altar, or burial grounds, and often without a resident minister.⁹⁹ There were also about 20 domestic chapels in the manor houses of the local gentry which in some areas also helped to supply the spiritual needs of the neighbouring population; Cholmondeley, for example, was long held to be a chapel of ease to Malpas parish church, as well as the private chapel of the lords of Cholmondeley. The chaplain there was never included among the diocesan clergy, but was recognized as serving the neighbourhood, both by preaching, and, more exceptionally, by the administration of the sacrament.¹ Some small chapelries, where the curate was nominated and paid by the lord of the manor, were often difficult to distinguish from purely domestic establishments and Bishop Gastrell recorded several attempts by Cheshire notables to claim domestic status for them.²

The see remained notoriously poor. In the 1660s a local historian, Randle Holme (III), remarked that the bishopric had been inadequately endowed and that the bishop was unable to maintain a 'stable and equipage or port' corresponding to his status;³ in 1668 Archbishop Sheldon told Bishop Wilkins that Chester was a diocese 'too mean for his merit.'⁴ The see had no lands of its own, and the bishop depended for his income mainly upon the rents of the rural deaneries, and the leases of the rectories appropriated to his see, the full value of which was generally concealed when they were assessed.⁵ Such income was relatively stable; tenants resisted attempts to increase their rents, and in the early 1660s few leases ran out. Expenditure, by contrast, was rising, and was especially high in the 1660s because of extraordinary expenses incurred at the Restoration. By 1663 the bishops had spent £600 in augmenting the incomes of their vicars and perpetual curates; they had contributed £300 towards repairs of the cathedral church and the dean's and prebendaries' houses, which were expected to cost a further £1,000; and they had spent £900 on the repair of the bishop's palace, which had been very severely damaged in the Interregnum⁶ and was thought to require the expenditure of a further £700. In the same year Bishop Hall had spent a further £86 on plate and furnishings for the cathedral. In addition the customary presents made by new bishops to the king bore heavily on Chester, which had three bishops in eight years. By 1663 they had cost the see £500, and Hall had paid a further £250 from the

⁹⁷ D.N.B.

⁹⁸ In Ches. 84 parishes were supplemented by 19 parochial and 34 lesser chapelries: P. Leicester, *Hist. Antiquities of Ches.* 192-8; B.L. Harl. MS. 2071, ff. 176-84.

⁹⁹ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 205, 252, 279-80, 285-6, 289, 295-6, 299, 302, 304-5, 315-16, 320-1, 325, 346, 348, 356, 358; J. P. Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 26, 103, 171; Leicester, *Ches. Antiquities*, 262, 273, 354, 363.

¹ Leicester, *Ches. Antiquities*, 193-7; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 193.

² Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 205, 285-6, 304.

³ B.L. Harl. MS. 2155, f. 104.

⁴ Bodl. MS. Tanner 314, f. 50.

⁵ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 32-5; Bodl. MS. Tanner 144, ff. 13-15.

⁶ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1660-1, 49.

income of his Windsor prebend. The see's income was then assessed at only £750 in a normal year, or £870 when there was a visitation.⁷

To augment their revenues the bishops relied on benefices held *in commendam*; Walton was a prebendary of St. Paul's and incumbent of several other livings, Hall a prebendary of Windsor and archdeacon of Canterbury.⁸ Hall sought to annex further benefices to the see. In 1662 he obtained from Sir Orlando Bridgeman the valuable rectory of Wigan (Lancs.),⁹ which was believed in the 1660s to have an income equal to if not exceeding that of the bishopric,¹⁰ and which was to be held by the bishops of Chester until 1707.¹¹ He hoped to retrieve from its unsatisfactory incumbent the vicarage of Croston (Lancs.), worth £400 a year, and opened proceedings for the recovery of Bradley rectory (Staffs.), lost through the mismanagement of Bishop Bird, a suit which, however, remained unresolved in Bishop Gastrell's time.¹²

Like their bishops, many of the clergy were also in straightened circumstances. Although Cheshire contained a few valuable benefices, such as Astbury and Stockport,¹³ it also had an unusually large number of very poor ones. The small chapelries in the eastern half of the county were often very poorly endowed, and dependent upon the voluntary contributions of their congregations, or on precarious grants from the local gentry.¹⁴ In the west of the county too, where parishes were much smaller, there were many poor livings some of which were without any regular income beyond what the impropiator allowed the curate,¹⁵ and a few unable to maintain an incumbent at all.¹⁶

The diocesan administration was quickly restored. In January 1661 the consistory court resumed its proceedings, dealing from an early date with a variety of business, including the enforcement of the Prayer Book, the correction of morals, defamation, matrimonial disputes, wills, tithes, church dues, and, eventually, with matters arising from visitation.¹⁷ Although Timothy Baldwin, Bishop Walton's first chancellor, appointed almost immediately after the bishop's own nomination, seems to have visited the diocese only briefly,¹⁸ his successor John Wainwright¹⁹ took up his duties in May 1661, and within two months was hearing summary cases involving sexual offences.²⁰ Reforms in consistory court procedure, which was everywhere subject to delays, were attempted by Archbishop Sheldon in 1664, and his orders on the subject were duly recorded at Chester. In 1665 Bishop Hall visited the court, and in response to his inquiries the advocates and proctors stated that they proceeded according to a manuscript known as 'clerk's practice', based upon the church's canons and the laws of the realm. The recent orders of the archbishop were, they claimed, duly observed. Hall, however, was not satisfied; he insisted on the addition of an extra proctor and drew up new procedures to eliminate unnecessary delays.²¹

General visitation was revived in 1662 by the metropolitan, Archbishop Frewen of York, and in 1665 Bishop Hall made his primary visitation, the first by a

⁷ Bodl. MS. Tanner 144, ff. 13–15.

⁸ *D.N.B.*

⁹ G.T.O. Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, iii (Chetham Soc. 2nd ser. xvii), 484.

¹⁰ B. L. Harl. MS. 2155, f. 104; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* ii. 2, 242–6.

¹¹ Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, iii. 601.

¹² Bodl. MS. Tanner 144, ff. 13, 21, 24; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 41–2.

¹³ Their annual incomes c. 1720 were £400 and over £500 respectively; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 235, 299.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 234, 285–6, 295–6, 299, 302, 305, 315–16, 325,

346, 348, 356, 358.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* i. 134, 150, 158–60, 167, 168.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* i. 109–10, 157.

¹⁷ Ches. R.O., EDC 1/59, 64–83, etc.; EDC 5/1661–70; the more contentious procedures, the corrective powers, appear to have been in use earlier than in the province of Canterbury: I. M. Green, *Restoration of the Ch. of Eng.* cap. VI.

¹⁸ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, f. 1; EDC 1/64 (14 Feb.).

¹⁹ Chancellor until 1682: Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, ff. 3, 109.

²⁰ *Ibid.* EDC 1/59, 64; EDA 3/2, ff. 76v–77v.

²¹ *Ibid.* EDA 2/3, ff. 20–24v.

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post-Restoration bishop of Chester.²² The revival of local visitation is much more difficult to trace. The two archdeaconries remained purely honorific offices worth £50 a year, and archidiaconal jurisdiction and visitatorial power continued to be vested in the rural deans, the first of whom were appointed in 1661, when Bishop Bridgeman's practice of granting the deaneries in groups was revived, to the benefit of the dean and archdeacon of Chester.²³ No records survive, however, of any ruridecanal visitation before 1668, probably because of the negligence of John Dwight, the secretary to the first three bishops, during whose tenure very few diocesan *acta* reached the registry.²⁴ Nevertheless, the rural deans must early have been active, for in 1662 the dean and chapter defended ruridecanal prerogatives, in particular that of proving minor wills, from episcopal encroachment. Soon afterwards control of the deaneries passed to diocesan officials, in 1666 to an advocate of the Chester consistory court, and in 1669 to John Wainwright, the chancellor. Thereafter in the archdeaconry of Chester only the Manchester deanery continued separate, in accordance with its grant in 1664.²⁵

Richmond archdeaconry retained its autonomy under its own commissary and registrar. The commissary and rural dean of all the Richmond deaneries appointed by Bishop Bridgeman in 1636 was still alive in 1660,²⁶ and a fresh grant of the combined offices was made only in 1665.²⁷ The commissary thereafter retained an extensive jurisdiction, which by 1714 was believed to be larger than the bishop's own.²⁸ Appeals from his court bypassed the Chester consistory and went directly to York.²⁹ In 1690, when Bishop Stratford proposed to visit the archdeaconry to investigate abuses alleged against the archdeacon's court, the then commissary even attempted to extend his independence and tried unsuccessfully to defy the visitation mandate of his ordinary.³⁰

Between 1660 and 1663 the parishes were much disturbed; of about 100 Cheshire benefices for which information exists, three-quarters had at least one new incumbent.³¹ At least 11 benefices were vacated by death, 9 by resignation, and 1 by desertion, but the great majority of the changes resulted from deliberate ejection. In over 40 benefices at least one minister was ejected, and in several places curates were ejected also. In some obdurate parishes two succeeding incumbents were forced out. Not all those ejected were convinced dissenters, unprepared to accept the Act of Uniformity. Many, especially those ejected before 1662, were removed to make way for returning royalists. They, however, usually found alternative livings; it was the nonconformists who suffered most. Although some received support from their conventicles, others clung to extremely meagre livings in the established church, which would not have supported an incumbent in normal circumstances.

Bishop Hall earned a particularly harsh reputation for his prosecution of those who contravened the 1662 Act.³² Several distinguished ministers ejected under its

²² York, Borthwick Inst. R. VI. A. 27; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34.

²³ Ches. R.O., EDR 6/7.

²⁴ Ibid. EDA 1/4, f. 137.

²⁵ Ibid. EDD 13/5/1; EDR 6/7.

²⁶ Ibid. EDR 6/6.

²⁷ That is the first grant mentioned by Gastrell: *Not. Cest.* i. 29.

²⁸ B. Till, 'Decline of Eccl. Cts. in York' (York Univ. M.A. thesis, 1963), 226.

²⁹ J. Addy, 'Life and Administration of Archd. of Richmond, 1541-1836' TS. in Ches. R.O., 34.

³⁰ Bodl. MS. Tanner, 152, ff. 426-43; Addy, 'Archd. of

Richmond', 6-7.

³¹ Where not otherwise specified in these paragraphs, the following sources have been used: York, Borthwick Inst., R. VI. A. 27; R. VI. C. 12; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/4; EDB; EDR, Registrars various, Box 1; EDV 2/8; P 3/1/1; P 13/1/1; P 36/1/1; P 53/1/1; P 87/1/1; P 96/1/1; Ches. wills; Barrow par. reg.; Eastham par. reg.; *Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews; *Walker Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews; 3 *Sheaf*, xxxi, pp. 2, 5, 7, 13, 17, 21, 23; Earwaker, *E. Ches.*; Earwaker, *Hist. Sandbach*, 237; *Alum. Oxon. 1500-1714*; *Alum. Cantab. to 1751*; *Wm. Salt Arch. Soc.* 1915, 16-17, 269, 274-5.

³² e.g. Ches. R.O., EDA 3/2, ff. 81v., 83v.-85, 103.

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provisions were imprisoned during his episcopate, including William Cook, Thomas Harrison, and James Bradshaw,³³ and all those who conformed and received episcopal ordination were required expressly to renounce Presbyterian orders if they had been conferred upon them.³⁴ As a result Hall was much hated. Adam Martindale, the ejected minister of Rostherne, was particularly severe: 'What favour could I expect, or rather what violent proceedings might I not expect, from a prelate so brisk with *significavit*, and . . . linked so fast with the patron?' Martindale believed that even if he had gone to the bishop and subscribed to everything required it would have been of no avail.³⁵

Some of the incoming men were strongly attached to the episcopalian order and liturgy. About 20 clergymen were restored to livings from which they had been ejected or excluded during the Interregnum, and a few others who had suffered elsewhere received new livings in the county. One was the son of a sequestered minister who took over his father's old rectory.³⁶ Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess how far patrons seized the opportunity radically to change the outlook of the Cheshire clergy; it is hard to determine the religious attitudes of many of the newcomers, a high proportion of whom had gone to school or university during the Interregnum. The Restoration, however, also brought preferment to many surviving incumbents; over a quarter of the new appointments were ministers who already held a living in the county, and who seized the opportunities provided by the changes to move to a more desirable living. They formed a mixed group. Some, such as Peter Ledsham, the new rector of Wilmslow, had been a thorn in the side of the Presbyterian authorities during the Interregnum.³⁷ Others were less friendly to the new order. Francis Lowe, for example, before he became rector of Taxal in 1663 had been for about fourteen years a well liked curate of Marple chapelry, which had welcomed a radical minister in the 1630s.³⁸

Those who conformed and retained their old livings also included a small minority of convinced Presbyterians. James Livesey, vicar of Great Budworth (1657–82), had been ordained by the Bury classis in 1650 and remained in contact with dissenting circles even after he reluctantly accepted episcopal ordination in 1662.³⁹ Several other ordained Presbyterians received episcopal orders.⁴⁰ Generally such men held only poor chapelries and lesser benefices.⁴¹ Those conformers who had been episcopally ordained in the 1640s or before were more numerous and influential, and some indeed had long shown royalist and episcopalian sympathies; William Holland, rector of Malpas, was known as an outspoken loyalist, despite his retention of his living throughout the Interregnum;⁴² Peter Harrison, rector of Cheadle, was prosecuted for royalism in 1659;⁴³ Richard Hunt, rector of St. Mary's, Chester, had been ejected for royalism in the 1640s, but had regained his living in 1655.⁴⁴ A few of the younger men had been episcopally ordained in the 1650s and later conformed to the Presbyterian church order. Henry Wigley, for example, was priested by an Irish bishop in 1651, and three years later was instituted to

³³ *Calamy Revised*, 69, 132–3, 250–1; *D.N.B.*, s.v. Bradshaw.

³⁴ C. E. Whiting, *Studies in Eng. Puritanism*, 16.

³⁵ *Life of Adam Martindale* (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] iv), 165.

³⁶ *Walker Revised*, 25, 88–94, 98; York, Borthwick Inst., R. VI. C. 12.

³⁷ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* i. 92–3.

³⁸ *Ches. R.O.*, EDC 5/1661–2.

³⁹ *Life of Martindale*, 220; *Calamy Revised*, 325.

⁴⁰ e.g. Edw. Mainwaring, Francis Moseley, Joseph Ottiwell, Thos. Porter: Venn, *Alum. Cantab. to 1751*.

⁴¹ e.g. Disley, Goostrey, Marple, Nantwich, Wistaston, Baddiley, Weaverham: Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 209, 222, 230, 256–7, 303, 305, 360.

⁴² Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 613.

⁴³ *Walker Revised*, 90–1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 91; J. P. Earwaker, *Hist. St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester*, 87–9.

Warmingham rectory.⁴⁵ The majority of conformers, however, appear to have been simply determined survivors, who retained their livings through all the changes.

Disaffected ministers were to be found especially where patrons were sympathetic to Presbyterianism. At Haslington the Vernons appointed a conformer listed by Calamy as ejected.⁴⁶ At Thornton le Moors George Booth, Lord Delamere, replaced the ejected minister with his chaplain, a moderate Presbyterian who had decided to conform. Delamere had offered Henry Newcome, ejected from Manchester College, the privilege of nominating the new incumbent, who was in return to provide Newcome with an annual pension from the rectory.⁴⁷ In a few places an unbroken puritan tradition may be traced. At Macclesfield, for example, the preacher and curate, both ejected in 1662, were replaced by Robert Barlow, the ejected but conforming rector of Mobberley, and Thomas, the son of Richard Pigott, a prominent Shropshire Presbyterian. Barlow was followed as preacher by two more ejected conformists, Robert Hunter, former curate of Knutsford, and Bradley Hayhurst, former rector of Taxal.⁴⁸ At Taxal, Hayhurst was succeeded by Francis Lowe, hardly a zealous adherent to the Prayer Book.⁴⁹ At Great Budworth the ardent puritan John Ley (vicar 1616–57) was succeeded by the Presbyterian James Livesey.⁵⁰

Some small chapels in east Cheshire received ejected nonconformists. Where a congregation or patron supported a preaching minister they easily obtained their own way; at Norbury, for example, the former curate was arrested in 1672 for continuing to preach at his old cure.⁵¹ Some congregations entirely deserted the established church. Chadkirk chapel, which retained its Oliverian minister at the Restoration, was in the hands of dissenters by 1669, and when in 1706 the nonconformist congregation was expelled the chapel was deserted and fell into ruin within 20 years.⁵² A similar pattern is observable in north Cheshire, where the small chapels of Lower Whitley and Ringway fell under nonconformist influence.⁵³ Elsewhere, the nonconformists were confined to conventicles in private houses until the Toleration Act of 1688.⁵⁴

There is little indication that the new men had trouble with their congregations. At Coppenhall, Wistaston, and Bebington incumbents were presented for not wearing a surplice or a gown, or for neglecting catechism, but in general such accusations are rare. There were few complaints of absenteeism or of failure to provide an adequate substitute. Pluralism occasionally proved a problem as at St. Oswald's, Chester, where the incumbent, who was also a prebendary of Chester cathedral and vicar of Waverton, was presented by the wardens for failing to catechize and read prayers. Accusations of scandalous life were very rare indeed.⁵⁵ The most common failings of incumbents were apparently a reluctance to perambulate and to repair buildings.⁵⁶

The new incumbents came to churches ill prepared for the worship of the established church. The cathedral itself was in need of considerable refurbishment,

⁴⁵ York, Borthwick Inst., R. VI. C. 12.

⁴⁶ *Calamy Revised*, 252.

⁴⁷ *Diary of Hen. Newcome* (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xviii), 118–19, 122, 125.

⁴⁸ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 504–5; *Calamy Revised*, 29, 68–9, 254, 285.

⁴⁹ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 546; *Calamy Revised*, 254; *Ches. R.O.*, EDC 5/1661–2.

⁵⁰ *Life of Martindale*, 220; *Calamy Revised*, 325.

⁵¹ *Calamy Revised*, 300–1; *D.N.B.*

⁵² Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 81; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 302; *Ches. R.O.*, EDV 1/36.

⁵³ Bodl. MS. Tanner 152, f. 59b; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 315–16. John Machin came to Lower Whitley in 1660 after being ejected from Astbury. Although ejected again in 1662 he remained there until succeeded by 'Mr. Kynaston': *Calamy Revised*, 332; W. Urwick, *Hist. Sketches of Nonconf. in Ches.* 404–12.

⁵⁴ See below.

⁵⁵ The only case is Alexander Featherstone, vicar of Wavertree and St. John's, Chester: *Ches. R.O.*, EDV 1/34, f. 22v.

⁵⁶ York, Borthwick Inst. R. VI. A. 27; *Ches. R.O.*, EDV 1/34.

and was supplied by Bishop Hall in 1663 with new gilt 'basin and pots' and a new episcopal stall.⁵⁷ Elsewhere Archbishop Frewen's metropolitan visitation of 1662-3 reveals that fittings, books, eucharistic vessels, and ornaments were lacking; few churches had a surplice, a terrier of church lands, books of homilies and the canons, or a table of the prohibited degrees. Many were also without cups, covers, flagons, and a carpet and linen cloth for the holy table. A few lacked such essentials as the Prayer Book or a font, and one or two were even without a Bible.⁵⁸ Occasionally the fittings had to be reorganized to accommodate the restored ritual, and in a few cases wardens were expressly instructed to beautify the church.⁵⁹ Although by 1665 many of the deficiencies had been remedied, they persisted in a few places where nonconformist traditions died hard or found a sympathetic or absentee incumbent. Farndon had no font cover, book of canons, Prayer Book, or table of degrees, although the wardens had acquired a font since 1662. Aldford, where the rector was an absentee, lacked a terrier and had no rails around the communion table. Thornton le Moors under the Presbyterian conformer Henry Shaw still had no properly placed font, terrier, or hearse cloth. Tilston under the conformer George Bonnyman had no cup and cover or rails round the holy table.⁶⁰

The buildings themselves also required attention. Many church roofs, steeples, and windows were in need of repair, and so were several parsonage houses, some of which had been damaged or even demolished in the civil wars.⁶¹ The principal problem, however, was the restoration of the cathedral and bishop's palace. The cathedral itself had escaped major structural damage during the Interregnum, but its ancillary buildings had not, and their repair was expected to be costly.⁶² Little, probably, was done, for in 1687 the state of the chapter house and cloisters excited the rage of James II.⁶³ Especially urgent was the repair of the bishop's palace, which was almost in ruins; after its sale in 1650, its contents were dispersed, the lead was stripped from its roofs, a large part demolished, and the rest used as a common gaol. Bishops Walton and Hall rendered it habitable, at considerable expense, but it remained a problem throughout the 1660s.⁶⁴

The restoration of the church also impinged upon the life of the laity. Episcopal visitation, resumed in 1662, continued fairly regularly thereafter until it lapsed under Bishop Pearson in 1677,⁶⁵ and ruridecanal visitation by 1668 also functioned regularly twice a year, except when suspended by a higher authority.⁶⁶ The visitors found nonconformity a severe problem throughout the diocese. In Cheshire many were presented as sectaries, schismatics, conventiclors, Quakers, new recusants, recusants, and papists. Many others were presented for not attending their parish church, or for refusing to receive the sacrament according to the rites of the established church. Other offences included keeping children unchristened, burying relatives out of the parish or in dissenting burial grounds, remaining excommunicate, not catechizing children, and not giving thanks after childbirth. Some reluctant conformers expressed their displeasure by unseemly behaviour in church, in particular by keeping their hats on during divine service, and even occasionally by the removal or defacement of church fittings. Feast days were frequently ignored. Above all, many of the laity resented paying financial dues to clergy whose title they

⁵⁷ Bodl. MS. Tanner 144, f. 15.

⁵⁸ York, Borthwick Inst., R. VI. A. 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid.; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, f. 17.

⁶⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34.

⁶¹ York, Borthwick Inst., R. VI. A.27; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34.

⁶² Bodl. MS. Tanner 144, ff. 14-15.

⁶³ *Diary of Thos. Cartwright* (Camd. Soc. [1st ser.] xxii),

34. ⁶⁴ J.C.A.S. N.S., xxxvii. 302-11.

⁶⁵ York, Borthwick Inst., R. VI. A. 27; R. VI. A. 29; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/44; EDV 1/50.

⁶⁶ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/35; EDV 1/36-43.

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doubted, whose views they disliked, or whose church they rejected. Cases of refusal to pay Easter offerings and church and clerk's dues were especially common throughout the 1660s.⁶⁷ Disputes concerning tithes also formed a high proportion of the cases before the newly constituted consistory court in the early 1660s.⁶⁸

In the 1660s the visitors were energetic, and in many cases, especially those involving moral lapses, the accused appeared in person, to be sentenced, if he admitted his guilt, to perform public penance at divine service by confessing his crime wrapped in a white sheet with a wand in his hand.⁶⁹ Such penances remained quite common throughout the later 17th century, although even then they could be commuted for cash payments, a practice which became increasingly frequent thereafter.⁷⁰ Failure to respond to excommunication resulted in the calling in of the secular arm and the arrest and imprisonment of offenders, a relatively unusual procedure, used mostly against obdurate schismatics.⁷¹

Hall was succeeded by two notable scholars, John Wilkins (1668–72) and John Pearson (1672–86). Wilkins, who had published copiously on a wide variety of subjects, was a man of very different outlook from Hall. Although he had been closely identified with the Oliverian regime, especially after 1656 when he married Cromwell's sister, in 1660 he had quickly made his peace with the new government and received preferment.⁷² Pearson was more conservative, a student of the Fathers and a defender of the church's traditional learning and institutions. A convinced royalist, he had been deprived of his benefices in the Interregnum and at the Restoration had received numerous honours and appointments. Even so he had taken a leading part in the Savoy conference, and won favourable opinions from Presbyterians by his courtesy and skill in debate.⁷³

Like Hall, both Wilkins and Pearson were troubled by nonconformity; ejected ministers retained minor chapelries in Lancashire and east Cheshire, and elsewhere continued to preach in their former churches.⁷⁴ Wilkins, not surprisingly, was sympathetic to dissent and made plans, later frustrated by Archbishop Sterne of York, to replace the most unsatisfactory of his clergy with moderate nonconformists.⁷⁵ He was popular among dissenters in his diocese, and both Newcome and Martindale regarded him as a friend.⁷⁶ Himself a conformer, he made considerable efforts to induce ejected ministers to follow his example, and at his death was thought to have made some progress: 'He brought others to conformity, some eminent men in his diocese, and might have had greater success had he survived.'⁷⁷ Nevertheless, even Wilkins had to take action against the obdurate; he insisted on the reordination of those in Presbyterian orders;⁷⁸ he required his clergy to swear to conform to the liturgy of the established church and to consent to everything in the Prayer Book;⁷⁹ he initiated an investigation of the numbers of nonconformists in Chester archdeaconry,⁸⁰ and eventually proceeded reluctantly against those who persisted in unauthorized preaching;⁸¹ in imitation of dissenting methods he established three lectureships to be maintained in 'distant parts' of Cheshire.⁸²

⁶⁷ York, Borthwick Inst. R. VI. A. 27; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34.

⁶⁸ Ches. R.O., EDC 5/1661–2.

⁶⁹ Ibid. EDV 1/52, ff. 41/1–2.

⁷⁰ 3 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 67–8, 69; Ches. R.O., EDA 3/2, ff. 125–7.

⁷¹ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34; EDV 1/44.

⁷² D.N.B.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Whiting, *Eng. Puritanism*, 33–6.

⁷⁵ *Life of Martindale*, 196.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; *Autobiog. of Hen. Newcome* (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xxvii–xxviii), 179, 202.

⁷⁷ Wm. Lloyd, *Sermons*, 34.

⁷⁸ *Life of Martindale*, 193.

⁷⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 4/1.

⁸⁰ Ibid. EDV 1/36.

⁸¹ *Life of Martindale*, 193.

⁸² Bodl. MS. Tanner 34, f. 27.

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Pearson in his early years was also indulgent towards nonconformists. He left nonconformists holding minor benefices undisturbed, and in 1678 he inducted into a Lancashire living a minister who refused to renounce the covenant.⁸³ His lenity, however, was perhaps the result of a certain infirmity of purpose rather than settled conviction. Towards the end of his life he acquiesced in the local magistrates' increasingly severe measures against nonconformists, and in 1683 he wrote to Sancroft complaining that Wilkins's lectureships had become a source of trouble, having fallen under the influence of a man disaffected to the government.⁸⁴

Although both Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury, and Pearson's successor at Chester believed that Pearson neglected his diocese in favour of his studies,⁸⁵ in his early years he proved himself an active pastor. Upon his appointment he came to live in his diocese, and in 1674 made his primary visitation, the first by a diocesan since Hall's in 1665.⁸⁶ In 1675 Pearson visited the cathedral; he insisted that the dean and prebendaries fulfil their residential qualifications, and tried to improve the quality of the choir.⁸⁷ In 1677 he made a second, and, as it was to prove, final visitation of the diocese.⁸⁸

Pearson's inquiries of 1674 resembled those of other bishops of the period in being almost wholly devoted to ensuring that the Act of Uniformity and canons of the established church were properly observed.⁸⁹ The presentments reveal that by then most of the necessary fittings, books, and vessels had been supplied, although a few parishes remained recalcitrant. There were few grossly unsatisfactory incumbents, the only examples in Cheshire being one minister of scandalous life and two absentees. Among the laity there had been a considerable increase in the number of presentments for Roman Catholicism, nonconformity, and non-attendance, and the numbers of those accused of refusing to pay their dues had more than tripled. Other offences, by contrast, showed much less variation.⁹⁰

By 1678 Pearson had begun to suffer from the sickness which increasingly incapacitated him,⁹¹ and by 1682 he was too infirm to endure the rigours of the long journeys especially necessary in his large diocese.⁹² Even so he continued to attend to diocesan business in a restricted way, and conscientiously adjudicated in parochial disputes at his residence in Wigan.⁹³ Although Pearson ceased personally to visit the diocese, ruridecanal visitations continued, and in 1684 Archbishop Dolben made his primary metropolitan visitation.⁹⁴ In 1686 a *visitatio triennialis* was instituted in Pearson's name, to be conducted by the diocesan administration,⁹⁵ since by then Pearson was too ill to conduct business in person. He had continued until 1685 to hold ordinations and make appointments, but in that year his mind gave way, and he died in 1686.⁹⁶

To replace Pearson in 1686 the new king, James II, on his own initiative appointed the dean of Ripon, Thomas Cartwright.⁹⁷ The appointment caused a scandal. Archbishop Dolben of York and other bishops wrote to Sancroft deploring the appointment and urging him to put a stop to the career of the 'bold dean of Ripon'.⁹⁸

⁸³ Whiting, *Eng. Puritanism*, 33, 36.

⁸⁴ Ches. R.O., EDP 51/5; Bodl. MS. Tanner 34, f. 27.

⁸⁵ Burnet, *Hist. of My Own Times* (1833 edn.), iii. 142; Bodl. MS. Tanner, 31, f. 178.

⁸⁶ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/44.

⁸⁷ Ibid. EDA 2/3.

⁸⁸ Ibid. EDV 1/50.

⁸⁹ E. Churton, *Memoir of Bp. Pearson*, p. lxxxvi.

⁹⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/44.

⁹¹ Churton, *Memoir*, p. lxxxvii.

⁹² Bodl. MS. Tanner 35, f. 162.

⁹³ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, ff. 81v–82; Churton, *Memoir*, pp. lxxvii–lxxxviii.

⁹⁴ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/52–63; York, Borthwick Inst. R. VI. A. 34.

⁹⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/64; EDV 2/10.

⁹⁶ Churton, *Memoir*, pp. lxxxix, xciii.

⁹⁷ N. Sykes, *From Sheldon to Secker*, 31.

⁹⁸ Bodl. MS. Tanner 31, ff. 146, 178.

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Burnet condemned the bishop as 'ambitious and servile, cruel and boisterous', and hinted at a scandalous life.⁹⁹ The root of the hatred of Cartwright lay in his exaltation of the royal prerogative and his close association with James's Roman Catholic confidants, policies which soon impinged on life at Chester.¹ Even during his first visit to the diocese his close relations with the leading recusant gentry, and his reception early in 1687 of Richard Talbot, earl of Tyrconnel, inevitably caused comment.² His loyalties were even more publicly displayed when he returned to his diocese later in the year, to receive a visit from the king, who stayed at the palace and touched for the king's evil in the cathedral choir.³

Despite his unsavoury reputation Cartwright appears to have been a conscientious bishop, who did all that could reasonably be expected of him in his short episcopate. There was indeed much to do. In a letter to Sancroft, Cartwright expressed anxiety about the effects of his predecessor's neglect of the 'public concerns of the church', and emphasized the disorder prevalent in most parts of the diocese. He resolved to preside regularly over the consistory court, and to attend daily prayers at the cathedral, where seven of the eight prebendaries neglected their duties. In 1687 he began a primary visitation of the cathedral, which concluded with the suspension of the dean after a wrangle over privileges, and the issue of injunctions similar to Pearson's.⁴ Another pressing need was the administration of confirmation to the great numbers denied it by Pearson's long incapacity. Although Cartwright confirmed large numbers in the cathedral and elsewhere in 1686 and 1687,⁵ he scarcely had time fully to deal with the problem.⁶ For the even more urgent need of a visitation of the diocese he never had time at all.⁷

The see's revenues also gave cause for anxiety. There was probably some truth in Cartwright's criticism of Pearson for financial inefficiency, and for employing officers 'intent on nothing but the getting of money', for Pearson's letters to Sancroft reveal growing embarrassment about his financial affairs, especially those of his Surrey archdeaconry.⁸ Diocesan officials had clearly come to regard certain lucrative privileges as rights; when in 1686 Cartwright leased 11 rural deaneries in the archdeaconry of Chester for an annual rent of £100, the grant occasioned a dispute between the lessees and the chancellor over the right to prove minor wills, which eventually went against the chancellor.⁹

After 1687 Cartwright had little time for his diocese. He was deeply involved in the events of 1688, and at the end of the year accompanied James into exile to die in Ireland in 1689.¹⁰ His successor was Nicholas Stratford (1689–1707), until 1684 warden of Manchester college. Stratford, who, though a High Churchman and a Tory, had been alienated by Stuart policies in the 1680s and had resigned his preferments, was to prove a zealous pastor almost constantly resident in his diocese, well adapted to dealing with the considerable problems which he inherited.¹¹

The new bishop confirmed Cartwright's assessment of the state of the see; the condition of many parishes was 'deplorable by reason of poor scandalous curates', and the fact that the diocesan had not held a visitation for thirteen years meant that 'many things are seriously amiss and very much need correction.' Stratford was

⁹⁹ Burnet, *Hist. of My Own Times*, iii. 144.

¹ D.N.B.

² *Diary of Thos. Cartwright*, 8–41.

³ *Ibid.* 69–83.

⁴ *Ibid.* 73, 77, 82–3; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, ff. 129v.–136.

⁵ *Diary of Thos. Cartwright*, 12, 21, 28, 72.

⁶ Bodl. MS. Tanner 30, f. 180.

⁷ *Ibid.* 152, f. 42b.

⁸ *Ibid.* 30, f. 180; 35, f. 8.

⁹ Ches. R.O., EDR 6/7; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 29; *Diary of Thos. Cartwright*, 22.

¹⁰ D.N.B.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

especially anxious to improve the quality of the clergy, and in 1690 sought to reduce the numbers of poor and unsatisfactory ministers by refusing licences to those on inadequate salaries.¹² In his charge of 1691 he established the standards which he expected of his pastors. Although preaching and catechizing were of pre-eminent importance, regular and canonical administration of the sacraments was also essential. Baptism was to be administered publicly on Sundays and holy days, children were to be prepared for confirmation, and the number of clandestine marriages reduced. Above all there was a 'too general neglect' of the eucharist, and the clergy were to ensure that the faithful regarded it not as a supererogatory act of piety, but as a 'necessary duty laid on them by Christ.' Learning was also desirable; Stratford recommended his clergy constantly to study the scriptures and the best commentators, and also, if possible, to read the Fathers.¹³ He set considerable store by a university education; 'It would', he wrote, 'be a happy day for this nation if every church and chapel in it could be provided with a minister who had spent some years in study at the university,' and he complained of the vicar of Preston that he was not a university man.¹⁴ Of 21 incumbents instituted in his first two years, 19 were graduates, and of 20 candidates ordained to the major orders in the same period, 18 had at least attended a university.¹⁵ Stratford also acted decisively against clergy accused of irregular life. An incumbent accused of drunkenness and sexual immorality in 1698 was suspended, and the income of his living devoted to the maintenance of his family and of a curate for the parish. He was still suspended when the case came before Stratford's successor in 1709.¹⁶

The spiritual and moral condition of the laity was also supervised with a new care. After an interval of ten years the diocese enjoyed a prolonged period in which confirmation was frequently and regularly administered.¹⁷ In his pastoral letter of 1690 Stratford urged his clergy to take especial care of their people's moral well-being, and to read the Acts and preach against swearing, perjury, drunkenness, and profanation of the sabbath.¹⁸ In his charge of 1691 he stressed that general admonitions were insufficient and that it was necessary to address particular sinners; notorious offenders were to be excluded from communion, as the rubric prescribed.¹⁹ The bishop held regular visitations of both diocese and cathedral from 1691,²⁰ and was also a zealous promoter of societies for the reformation of manners, even though they were regarded with great suspicion by most High Churchmen as involving co-operation with dissenters and were condemned by his metropolitan, Archbishop Sharp.²¹ In Chester the bishop and his dean, Dr. Fogg, let it be known that they were greatly grieved by the 'open and scandalous wickedness that abounded' there, and established a monthly lecture in the cathedral, the first of which was preached by Stratford.²²

The non-jurors presented an especial problem, particularly in the early years of Stratford's episcopate. In Cheshire at least ten beneficed clergymen at first refused the oaths,²³ and were supported by such important families as the Cholmondeleys of

¹² Bodl. MS. Tanner 152, ff. 42, 42b.

¹³ N. Stratford, *Charge*, 1691.

¹⁴ Bodl. MS. Tanner 152, f. 51b.

¹⁵ *Chester Clergy List*, 1691 (Chetham Soc. [2nd ser.] lxxiii), *passim*; Venn, *Alum. Cantab. to 1751*; Foster, *Alum. Oxon. 1500-1714*.

¹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, f. 240v.; EDA 2/4, p. 89.

¹⁷ Bodl. MS. Tanner 152, ff. 50-52v.

¹⁸ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, ff. 155-6.

¹⁹ Stratford, *Charge*, 1691.

²⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/65; EDV 1/67; EDA 2/3, ff. 176-84; York, Borthwick Inst. R. VI. C. 17.

²¹ C. T. Abbey, *Eng. Ch. and its Bps. 1700-1800*, 46-50, 161.

²² Bridgeman, *Hist. Wigan*, iii. 598.

²³ Two or three later complied: 3 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 57-8, 59-60, 61-2, 73, 75; J. H. Overton, *The Non-Jurors: Their Lives, Principles, and Writings*, 471-6; Ches. R.O., EDV 2/10-10a; EDV 2/11.

²⁴ Overton, *Non-Jurors*, 270-1, 288; 3 *Sheaf*, i, p. 75.

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Vale Royal and the Grosvenors of Eaton.²⁴ Stratford found difficulty in filling the benefices of the deprived clergymen the validity of whose orders and institution was not in doubt. One living remained vacant until 1696, and another was still unfilled in 1705.²⁵ The deprived put legal difficulties in the way of candidates presented to their former livings and continued to preach as late as 1692. The bishop personally heard one case, but the deprived incumbent appealed to York against his decision,²⁶ and he was forbidden to proceed further. In three other Cheshire parishes Stratford had been unable to find anybody willing to officiate, and in a fourth the intruding clergyman was so ill treated that he soon resigned the living.²⁷

Dissent also remained a problem; in 1692 Stratford complained that the vicar of Preston (Lancs.), one of the most important churches in the diocese, was 'disaffected to the liturgy and discipline of the Church of England.'²⁸ Nonconformists continued to appropriate minor chapels in the diocese. In 1692 the bishop lamented that the Nantwich J.P.s had registered Wettenhall chapel as a meeting place for dissenters despite the fact that it was rightfully a chapel of ease belonging to the parish of Over.²⁹ Nonconformity was steadily gaining acceptance; in 1708 Stratford's successor felt it necessary to emphasize the distinctions between the tolerated sects and the established church: 'Schism is schism still.'³⁰

Stratford soon became deeply involved in the routine administration of his diocese, and when at Chester consulted almost daily with Thomas Wainwright, the chancellor, and Henry Prescott, the deputy registrar. He also presided regularly over the diocesan court, where he dealt with a wide variety of cases, some of them tumultuous. Gradually there gathered round him a closely-knit High Church, High Tory circle, which included the chancellor, the deputy registrar, the archdeacons, members of the cathedral chapter, and such influential laymen as Sir Henry Bunbury.³¹ Stratford's immediate successors were sympathetic to the group. Although his death in 1707 was followed by a prolonged struggle at court,³² the queen eventually followed the advice of Archbishop Sharp, and in 1708 personally nominated her chaplain, Sir William Dawes, a Hanoverian Tory and High Churchman, anxious to revive the sacramental life of the established church.³³ When Dawes was translated to York in 1714,³⁴ an even stauncher Tory was found in Francis Gastrell (1714-25), a canon of Christ Church, Oxford, and client of Robert Harley, earl of Oxford. Upon the death of the queen Gastrell became a prominent opponent of the Hanoverian Whig ministry, and in 1723 he and Dawes were the only bishops to oppose the bill for inflicting penalties upon Bishop Atterbury of Rochester.³⁵

Such views were popular in the diocese. The parish clergy were solidly Tory in the 1690s and notably reluctant to swear oaths of loyalty to William III.³⁶ In 1710 Cheshire was one of only four counties where the clergy were overwhelmingly Tory,³⁷ and in 1714 the diocese was described as a stronghold of Jacobitism.³⁸ In clerical circles in Chester itself such sentiments were especially strong. In 1708 the delay in the appointment of Stratford's successor caused much concern there and a Whig appointment was greatly feared.³⁹ In 1714 the accession of George I was much

²⁴ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/11; 3 *Sheaf*, i, p. 75.

²⁵ York, Borthwick Inst. R. VII, PF. 31.

²⁶ Bodl. MS. Tanner 152, ff. 55v.-59.

²⁷ *Ibid.* ff. 50-52v.

²⁸ *Ibid.* ff. 54-55v.

²⁹ York, Borthwick Inst., Prescott's diary (1709).

³⁰ *Ibid.* (1692-1706).

³¹ *E.H.R.* cxvii. 440-6.

³² *D.N.B.*

³³ York, Borthwick Inst. Prescott's diary (1714).

³⁴ *D.N.B.*

³⁵ *V.C.H. Ches.* ii. 120; N. Sykes, *Ch. and State in Eng. in 18th Cent.* 73.

³⁶ *V.C.H. Ches.* ii. 120-1.

³⁷ *E.H.R.* cxvii. 459.

³⁸ York, Borthwick Inst., Prescott's diary (1707-8).

deplored and attempts were made to avoid taking the oaths to the new king.⁴⁰ In 1715 the advent of the Old Pretender was followed with great interest in Chester, and a collection was taken there for rebels captured at Preston, to which the deputy registrar and a prebendary of the cathedral subscribed.⁴¹ Gastrell in particular worked hard to encourage such loyalties elsewhere in his see. In 1719 he vigorously opposed the appointment of the Whig Samuel Peploe to the wardenship of Manchester College on the ground that he was insufficiently qualified for high ecclesiastical office.⁴² In 1725 Bishop Gibson felt that Gastrell had given 'great strength to the Tories' in the diocese, especially among the clergy.⁴³

Despite their political interests Dawes and Gastrell were conscientious bishops. Dawes, in particular, was an enthusiastic visitor. He spent the summer of 1708, accompanied by a numerous entourage, making an exhaustive tour of the diocese, confirming, ordaining, and celebrating the eucharist in many of its major centres.⁴⁴ In 1709 he conducted his primary visitation.⁴⁵ In 1710 he visited the cathedral,⁴⁶ and in 1712 he held a second general visitation.⁴⁷ The unwearied visiting of their 'robust brother of Chester' caused comment among his fellow-bishops.⁴⁸ Gastrell, an absentee living in Oxford, could not hope to be so thorough. Nevertheless, he visited his diocese at least in 1716 and 1725, and thoroughly investigated its condition.⁴⁹ In 1717 he conducted an inquiry into education in the diocese, seeking details of endowments, masters' salaries and numbers of pupils.⁵⁰ In 1722, finding the traditional churchwardens' returns uninformative, he sent out special articles of inquiry, seeking information on a wide variety of subjects, including schools, parish officials and revenues, and local traditions, the results of which he embodied in a lengthy survey, the *Notitia Cestriensis*.⁵¹

The see remained poor. In 1708 when Archbishop Sharp wrote to Dawes to urge him to accept Chester, he pleaded that the bishopric was not so 'mean' as it was represented, and assessed its revenues at £900 a year without the living of Wigan.⁵² When Gastrell analysed his revenues in the 1720s he put the total annual income of the see at £950. In an attempt to increase it he administered directly the Manchester deanery, which had long been farmed separately from the others.⁵³ Many of the clergy were also in financial difficulties. In 1697 Edmund Entwistle, archdeacon of Chester 1695–1707, lamented the inadequacy of the established church's endowments, and emphasized that Cheshire with its many small parishes and chapelries contained especially large numbers of impoverished clergymen. Many chapelries did not provide their incumbents with more than £10 a year, and even the best augmented by the 'constant drudgery' of teaching yielded no more than £20 a year. There were even rectories and vicarages worth less than that sum; in Chester itself, for example, the livings were dependent upon voluntary contributions and only one of them was worth over £50 a year.⁵⁴ When the diocese's benefices were evaluated after the foundation of Queen Anne's Bounty in 1704, 10 of the 12 chapelries of Prestbury parish were found to be worth less than £5 a year, and the Wirral deanery

⁴⁰ Ibid. (1714).

⁴¹ Ibid. (1715–16).

⁴² *Biographia Britannica*, iii. 2151–3.

⁴³ Sykes, *Ch. and State*, 73.

⁴⁴ York, Borthwick Inst., Prescott's diary (1708).

⁴⁵ Ibid. (1709).

⁴⁶ W. Dawes, *Works*.

⁴⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/84.

⁴⁸ Sykes, *Ch. and State*, 143; J. Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps. of Chester and their Dioc. 1771–87' (Leeds Univ. Ph.D.

thesis, 1972), 28.

⁴⁹ York, Borthwick Inst., Prescott's diary; *Threnodia Cestriensis* (1726).

⁵⁰ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 29–30.

⁵¹ Ches. R.O., EDA 6/7; Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 29–30.

⁵² A. Tindal Hart, *Life and Times of John Sharp*, 242.

⁵³ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 32–5.

⁵⁴ Chester City R.O., Chester Arch. Soc. Libr., E. Entwistle, *Sermon*, 3 June 1697.

was found to contain at least 9 small livings worth under £40 a year.⁵⁵ After the Bounty was put on a satisfactory financial footing in 1717,⁵⁶ augmentation of the poorer benefices went ahead rapidly. Gastrell conducted thorough valuations,⁵⁷ and between 1719 and 1724 19 livings were assisted. To those worth £35 or less a year a grant of £200 was made, which for those worth over £10 was conditional upon being matched by private contributions. In 1721 Gastrell himself set an example to his diocese by giving £200 towards the augmentation of the vicarage of Mottram.⁵⁸

Buildings were also improved. A few new parsonage houses were built in the early 18th century,⁵⁹ and several churches repaired.⁶⁰ In 1699 Stratford appealed for funds to restore the ruinous east end of St. Olave's, Chester, and in the early 1700s briefs were granted to raise funds for the repair of the cathedral and reconstruction of the dangerously decayed church at Minshull.⁶¹ Burton church was entirely reconstructed in 1720, and an aisle added to West Kirby in 1719.⁶² Considerable alterations were made to furnishings, and in particular numerous galleries were erected and much seating made uniform.⁶³ In clerical circles at Chester there arose a new interest in beautifying churches, well exemplified in the plans which Stratford approved for the refurnishing of Upholland chapel (Lancs.), the deputy registrar's church and a dependency of the episcopal rectory of Wigan. The chancel was to be 'decently seated, in a choral way', so that there was a clear view of and free access to the altar, itself newly provided with rails. It was thus intended to ensure that divine worship was celebrated 'in greater order and beauty.'⁶⁴

1726-1828

When Gastrell died in 1725 the government determined to eliminate sedition in the see. Gastrell was succeeded by his enemy Samuel Peploe, the warden of Manchester College, a latitudinarian and a Whig, who found few sympathizers among his clergy. Peploe, indeed, was already on very bad terms with the Jacobite and High Church fellows of Manchester College, who at his elevation contended that he could not combine the wardenship with his new role as episcopal visitor, and excluded him from visitatorial activity until his resignation as warden in 1738.⁶⁵ He was also soon at loggerheads with his chancellor, his predecessor's nephew, Peregrine Gastrell, over the prerogatives of the latter's office.⁶⁶ About 1735 he cited Gastrell to the archbishop's court at York, to justify his receipt of money for commutations of penance, but Gastrell defended himself with vigour and the case was dismissed.⁶⁷ In 1747 the affair kindled again, when Gastrell complained that, after the failure of his case, the bishop had illegally usurped the chancellor's due fees.⁶⁸ Such disharmony could only gradually be eliminated by judicious appointments, and Peploe exploited his patronage to the full. He made his son Samuel successively archdeacon of Richmond, warden of Manchester College, and eventually chancellor, upon Gastrell's death in 1748,⁶⁹ acts of such flagrant nepotism that

⁵⁵ Ches. R.O., EDA 6/1/1-28.

⁵⁶ G.F.A. Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 84.

⁵⁷ Ches. R.O., EDA 6/4; EDA 6/10/1-2.

⁵⁸ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 110, 134, 189, 195, 222, 238, 248, 251, 253, 257, 259, 277, 280, 287, 288, 293, 295, 316, 327, 358; Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 86-7.

⁵⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/4, pp. 112, 361.

⁶⁰ R. J. Pope, '18th-Cent. Ch. in Wirral' (Wales Univ. M.A. thesis, 1971).

⁶¹ Ches. R.O., EDP 75/6; EDP 84/4; 1 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 197-8.

⁶² Pope, '18th-Cent. Ch. in Wirral', 86-7.

⁶³ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3-4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* EDA 2/3, ff. 256v.-257.

⁶⁵ *D.N.B.*

⁶⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, i, p. 16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* ii, p. 56.

⁶⁸ P. Gastrell, *An Enquiry into the Exercise of Some Parts of Eccl. Jurisdiction* (1747).

⁶⁹ Addy, 'Archdeaconry of Richmond', App. D; *D.N.B.*; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/5, pp. 540-1; EDA 2/6, p. 287.

even in 18th-century Chester they were thought excessive. The diocese was further alienated by Peploe's parsimony; in order to 'raise a fortune' for his family he was said to live in a 'mean, inhospitable manner' and to have allowed the episcopal palace to decay to such an extent that his successor found it 'absolutely necessary' to rebuild it.⁷⁰

For Peploe, with his Broad Church sympathies, political rather than ecclesiastical considerations were of supreme importance. At his primary visitation in 1728 he emphasized that the clergy had a duty to obey the higher powers set over them, and reminded them that they would be required on all proper occasions to declare themselves obliged by oath to maintain the protestant succession. The clergy were to recognize those protestants who made 'a peaceable and conscientious use of the liberty which the law very properly allowed them', and to accept all except those non-jurors who expressly refused the oaths to the Hanoverian kings. Clericalism was attacked; churchwardens were instructed to watch over the behaviour of the clergy, and the laity advised to judge their minister's teaching by reference to their own understanding of Holy Writ.⁷¹

The diocese remained unsympathetic to Peploe's politics. In Chester the city fathers were hostile, and in 1739 when Peploe refused them admission to Abbey Court the mayor gave orders for the abbey gates to be broken down.⁷² Although in 1739 Peploe wrote to the duke of Newcastle that he had secured a Whig majority in the cathedral chapter, and the clergy of 'the honest side of the question' had increased in the city, his progress was limited.⁷³ In 1745 while Peploe preached in his cathedral a sermon attacking the rebels and their faith, the fellows of Manchester College enthusiastically received the Young Pretender.⁷⁴ In 1747 Peploe again found it necessary to condemn Roman Catholicism.⁷⁵ The diocese was then still regarded as Jacobite and popish, and Archbishop Herring of York demanded a staunch Whig as Peploe's successor.⁷⁶

Upon his death in 1752 Peploe was succeeded by Edmund Keene (1752–71), master of Peterhouse, Cambridge. Keene came from a Whig family and in his youth had benefited from Walpole's patronage.⁷⁷ Although he retained his mastership for two years after his appointment, by the mid 1750s he was resident in Chester, where he renovated and enlarged the palace at a cost of over £2,000, a sum even then considered excessive.⁷⁸ Keene's successor, William Markham (1771–7), was non-resident for most of his brief episcopate, his time being taken up with his duties as dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and tutor to the prince of Wales.⁷⁹ Although he made annual visits to the see, and conducted ordinations at Chester and elsewhere,⁸⁰ he made no visitation, and left the administration at Chester in the hands of the chancellor, Samuel Peploe.⁸¹

The diocese still faced grave problems. Pluralism and non-residence had become serious abuses, partly because of the poverty of many livings, perhaps one-third of which lacked parsonage houses. In many poor chapelries incumbents were forced to supplement their incomes by holding additional cures or taking additional employment such as school-teaching. The quality and education of the clergy were

⁷⁰ B.L. Add. MS. 5836, f. 221.

⁷¹ S. Peploe, *Charge*, 1728.

⁷² J.C.A.S. xxxvii. 70.

⁷³ Sykes, *Ch. and State*, 73–5.

⁷⁴ D.N.B.; Chester cathedral libr., Saunders MSS.

⁷⁵ Sykes, *Ch. and State*, 74; Peploe, *Charge*, 1747.

⁷⁶ Sykes, *Ch. and State*, 75.

⁷⁷ D.N.B.

⁷⁸ J.C.A.S. xxxvii. 75–6; B.L. Add. MS. 5836, ff. 219v.–221.

⁷⁹ D.N.B.

⁸⁰ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/7, ff. 129v.–166v.

⁸¹ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 53–9.

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correspondingly low, and tenures often extremely brief.⁸² In 1770 less than half the clergy of the diocese possessed degrees.⁸³ Like other bishops of the period the mid-18th-century bishops of Chester exerted little control over the quality of ordinands. In 1728 at his primary visitation Peploe warned his clergy to take care in issuing testimonials to candidates for holy orders lest 'vicious men' obtain ordination, but such advice had little effect.⁸⁴ Clergy in the more remote parts of the diocese were especially unsatisfactory. In 1743 the vicar of Kirby Ireleth (Lancs.), a peculiar belonging to the dean and chapter of York, complained of the irregularities of one of the curates in his parish, who had been ordained by Peploe, and of the ineffectiveness of the bishop's attempts to discipline him. He drew a grim picture of Peploe's ordinands, 'a whole colony of poor raw boys taken from home-bred insignificant schools and ordained deacons on some sorry titles, mere readers' places', and alleged that many had found their way into York diocese, where they provided incumbents with 'low-priced curates.'⁸⁵ Peploe himself appears to have been conscious of the low quality of his clergy. In his charge of 1747 he delivered a discourse on clerical duties to encourage them and enable them to refute the attacks of those who regarded them as 'useless and burdensome, idle and superficial in ministerial performances.' He again emphasized the necessity of circumspection in the giving of letters testimonial, and urged the need for a clause stating that the referee was personally acquainted with the candidate. He threatened to inhibit unlicensed intruders. Pluralism and non-residence were condemned and the clergy reminded that a statute of Queen Anne required the proper support of a curate, and vested power to determine the salary in the bishop. Henceforth, 'notice' was to be taken of those numerous incumbents who appointed unlicensed curates and fixed their salaries without application to the diocesan.⁸⁶

Keene, too, made efforts to deal with such problems. He conducted a conscientious primary visitation in 1754, and made responsible appointments to the livings in his gift, rejecting unsuitable candidates if sufficient representation was made. He tried to ensure that curates were provided for those parishes and chapelries where the incumbent was non-resident, and supported their demands for a reasonable stipend. He also attempted to control the quality of candidates for orders, requiring them to present a *curriculum vitae* at the ordinations which he held regularly in the diocese from the beginning of his episcopate. Even so he failed to reduce the numbers ordained with a defective title, or to prevent the poorer chapelries from changing hands with extreme frequency.⁸⁷

Throughout the 18th century the population of the diocese expanded; in 1781 Porteous calculated that it had risen by 250,000 since 1730.⁸⁸ Extra church accommodation was needed and numerous faculties were granted for repairs and for the insertion of new galleries. Nevertheless, because the new furnishings were usually either sold or rented there was no significant increase in the amount of seating generally available and the number of free places even perhaps decreased.⁸⁹ About 40 churches were consecrated in the diocese during Peploe's episcopate,⁹⁰ but

⁸² Ibid. 66-7; cf. R. B. Walker, 'Religious Changes in Ches.' *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 79-80.

⁸³ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 61, 65-6; cf. B. Porteous, *Charge*, 1778, 8-9.

⁸⁴ Peploe, *Charge*, 1728.

⁸⁵ *Abp. Herring's Visitation Returns*, ii (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Rec. Ser. 1xxii), 98-102. Dr. Addy kindly supplied this reference.

⁸⁶ Peploe, *Charge*, 1747.

⁸⁷ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/6; Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 37-42.

⁸⁸ Lamb. Palace Libr. MS. 2099, f. 8; cf. *ibid.* MS. Fulham Papers, 160.

⁸⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/5-8; Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 77.

⁹⁰ *D.N.B.*

church building petered out in the middle of the century and between 1748 and 1778 only two new churches were erected in Cheshire and three ruined or inadequate ones rebuilt.⁹¹

Upon his translation to York in 1777 Markham was replaced at Chester by Beilby Porteous (1777–87). The son of American parents, he was rector of Lambeth at the time of his elevation, but resigned the living because the heavy duties which it demanded were incompatible with his new status. Porteous brought a new energy to the diocesan administration and sought to assess the scale of its problems by sending out inquiries upon a wide variety of topics, including the financial circumstances of the parishes and the state of their buildings, the residence of incumbents, the duty performed by them and their curates, and the numbers of absentees from the parish church, whether Roman Catholic, dissenting, or atheist.⁹² Porteous was translated to London in 1787, and, like him, his immediate successors did not stay long at Chester. William Cleaver (1787–1800) and Henry William Majendie (1800–9) were successively translated to Bangor; Bowyer Sparke (1809–12) soon removed to Ely; George Henry Law (1812–24) went to Bath and Wells; Charles Blomfield (1824–8) was quickly promoted to London.⁹³ Nevertheless, although their relatively short episcopates hindered their attempts to deal with the increasingly obvious problems of their laborious and unremunerative see,⁹⁴ the bishops generally showed at least some interest in reform. With the exception of Sparke they all issued articles of inquiry along the lines of those sent out in 1778.⁹⁵ Cleaver, although an absentee, enjoyed a reputation as a reformer, and his charges reveal a genuine concern for the well-being of his clergy.⁹⁶ Majendie, a former royal tutor and canon of Windsor, was also a man of reforming views.⁹⁷ Law and Blomfield were particularly active and conscientious bishops. Law reintroduced the triennial visitations, which had lapsed under his predecessors, and personally visited every parish in the diocese,⁹⁸ while Blomfield's administrative skills and austere standards were to win him great respect in some quarters, if considerable notoriety amongst those whose personal code of conduct was less severe.⁹⁹

Under Porteous and his successors attempts were at last made to assess the problems which had become increasingly apparent in the diocese during the 18th century. In the 1770s there was still a degree of complacency about the measures taken by the established church to cope with the increase in population, and in 1777 Porteous himself had written to the inhabitants of Manchester and Macclesfield praising them for increasing their churches in proportion to their growing numbers.¹ The returns to his 1778 inquiries, however, revealed that despite a generally acknowledged increase in the size of congregations there were many who absented themselves from their parish church both in the rural areas and the new industrial towns.² Attendance at church had become purely voluntary, and although presentments for non-attendance and neglecting the sacrament had continued well into the 18th century, and were still occasionally made, no disciplinary action was taken against habitual offenders. When in 1747 it was recorded that the majority of the congregation at Lower Peover were non-communicants, it was felt that to present

⁹¹ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/6–7.

⁹² Ibid. EDV 7/1.

⁹³ *Handbk. of Brit. Chronology*, 215.

⁹⁴ A. Blomfield, *Memoir of Chas. Jas. Blomfield*, 76.

⁹⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/2–7.

⁹⁶ D.N.B.; W. Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799.

⁹⁸ Ibid.; G. H. Law, *Charge*, 1814.

⁹⁹ D.N.B.; Blomfield, *Memoir*, 76–80.

¹ B. Porteous, *Letter to Inhab. of Manchester, Macclesfield, and Adjacent Parts*, 10 Oct. 1777.

² Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/27, 36, 61, 65, 69, 80, 85, 88, 104,

⁹⁷ D.N.B. 106, 122.

them would do more harm than good.³ All that survived of the old discipline was the duty of the churchwardens to visit inns and public houses at the time of divine service, to ensure that they were closed, a duty which, although still being performed in 1825, suffered increasing neglect.⁴

The incumbents themselves associated the growth of manufacturing with a decline in morality, and almost always described absentees as of 'the lower sort', or of 'no or bad education.' Various reasons were adduced for their behaviour. The poor were too indolent to attend church, or feared that their clothes were not sufficiently decent; the cotton-spinners and weavers abused their new-found wealth in idleness and profanation of the sabbath; the wardens did not fulfil their duties properly and neglected their Sunday tours of the alehouses. At Church Hulme the incumbent lamented that presentment at the spiritual court only hardened the attitude of wrongdoers, who discovered that they suffered nothing worse than the publication of their names at divine service. At Stockport the rector blamed the wardens who were empowered by an Act of Elizabeth I to levy a fine of 1s. a week against absentees, but failed to put that or other 'compulsive laws' into execution.⁵

Although Porteous was aware of the growing population and its attendant problems, few new churches were built during his episcopate.⁶ Because of the legal difficulties, no new parishes were created, and in the new districts the rights of the mother-church were always reserved, so that double fees had to be charged for marriages and burials.⁷ Porteous directed his energies to education rather than to church-building. He was an early enthusiast for Sunday schools, and in 1786 urged his clergy to establish them wherever possible, as an effective antidote to 'the extreme depravity and licentiousness' which he believed to prevail amongst 'the lowest orders of people.' The small degree of learning acquired in the Sunday schools would not, Porteous believed, predispose their pupils against 'the most laborious employments in town and country', but would merely implant in them 'sobriety, industry, veracity, honesty, humility, patience, content, resignation to the will of God, and submission to the authority of their superiors.' Sunday schools, moreover, would inculcate the Anglican catechism and make children better able to use their prayer books and Bibles, so that they were less likely to be 'perverted' by the artifices of popish emissaries.⁸

Although Porteous was the first bishop to draw attention to the problems posed by the growing population of his diocese, the remedies he proposed were insufficient. His successors' charges reveal increasing anxiety about the progress of irreligion. Cleaver, who warned of the danger of a 'national depravity' which would prove a threat to rank and property, calculated that in one parish alone over 40,000 people neglected all forms of public worship.⁹ Majendie commented on the 'extraordinary importance and difficulty' of the peculiar problems facing his diocese.¹⁰ Law expressed concern about the transformation of 'the faith, morals, and very nature of the great mass of the community' which he attributed to the blasphemous and seditious influence of the press. He was aware of the need to increase church accommodation, and recommended 'a better disposition of pews and sittings,' lest 'a large and increasing number' of his flock be 'driven out of the fold from mere

³ Ibid. EDV 1/111, ff. 1v., 5v.-7v., 18v.; EDV 1/126, ff. 16v., 20v., 30; EDV 1/140, f. 55; EDV 7/1/80.

⁴ Ibid. EDV 7/2/47; EDV 7/7/22, 141, 502. Cf. EDV 7/7/176, 201, 276, 378, 427, 443, 467, 501.

⁵ Ibid. EDV 7/1.

⁶ Ibid. EDA 2/8, pp. 17-35, 125-31, 279-81.

⁷ Ibid. EDA 2/6-8.

⁸ B. Porteous, *Letter to Clergy of Chester concerning Sunday Schools*.

⁹ Cleaver, *Charge*, 1779.

¹⁰ Majendie, *Charge*, 1804.

inability to obtain admission into churches.' In 1820 he conducted a personal visitation of the whole diocese, the better to consider the matter.¹¹

Figures produced in Parliament bear out the need for concern. In 1812 Chester was regarded as the third most populous diocese; in the larger parishes, with a population over 1,000, there were an estimated 570,000 inhabitants, of whom, it was thought, only 220,000 could be accommodated in Anglican churches and chapels.¹² By 1818, when it had become the largest diocese of all, with a population of 950,000, its total accommodation was assessed at merely 188,000.¹³ The towns were particularly ill provided. In 1818 Liverpool had the best figures, with a population estimated at over 94,000 and 21,000 sittings; Manchester and Salford, with a joint population of over 101,000 had c. 13,500, and Stockport with 34,000, a mere 2,500.¹⁴ Even in country areas, however, attendance was only marginally better; in 1821, for example, only 20 per cent of country dwellers in Cheshire attended Anglican services, compared with 12 per cent in the towns.¹⁵

Church-building did something to alleviate the problem, by establishing an Anglican presence in the manufacturing towns and the remote rural areas. In Cheshire new chapels of ease were built at Alsager in 1789 and at Altrincham in 1799; the church at Little Budworth and the chapels at Goostrey and Marple were rebuilt between 1790 and 1810¹⁶ and the churches at West Kirby and Runcorn enlarged.¹⁷ In 1809 the first of the government grants towards the endowing and augmenting of benefices in populous districts was awarded, and thereafter building proceeded rather more rapidly. Between 1810 and 1817 five churches and chapels were rebuilt or enlarged, and three new churches erected, at High Legh, Delamere, and Threapwood.¹⁸ In 1818 Parliament's decision to set aside one million pounds for new churches saw the establishment of the Church Building Commissioners, one of the most active of whom was Bishop Law.¹⁹ The million-pound grant funded the building of nineteen churches in Lancashire and one in Cheshire, St. Thomas's, Stockport, built to Basevi's expensive designs.²⁰ Law was the first commissioner to investigate the question of design, and was a patron of Thomas Rickman, who at his instigation prepared a prototype of a church costing £6,000 and seating 1,500. The design was rejected on the advice of the Crown architects, but Law remained faithful to Rickman, who was eventually accepted by the commissioners and went on to build six Lancashire churches for them.²¹

By the early 19th century parliamentary grants were virtually the only public funds available for church building. Church rate was already by then a source of trouble, and could no longer effectively be used in the manufacturing towns where churches were most needed. The debt incurred as a result of the rebuilding of Stockport St. Mary's was still a cause of contention in 1834, and in Macclesfield the rate was entirely abandoned.²² Private benefaction and voluntary subscription afforded some aid, and in the 1820s several churches were built in Cheshire by such

¹¹ Law, *Charge*, 1820.

¹² *Abstract of No. of Par. containing a Pop. of 1,000 and Upwards*, H.C. 256 (1812), x, MS. p. 155.

¹³ *Accounts of Pop. of Certain Benefices*, H.C. (1818), xviii, MS. pp. 102-3. The figs. are very unreliable; cf. the 1815 figs. in which the pop. was assessed at 1,247,889, and the no. of sittings at 326,939: *Accts of Benefices and their Pop.* H.C. (1818), xviii, MS. p. 359; R. Yates, *Basis of National Welfare*, 156.

¹⁴ *Accts. of Pop. of Certain Benefices*.

¹⁵ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 81.

¹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/8, pp. 436-51; EDA 2/10, pp. 41-5,

90-104, 127-30; EDA 2/11, pp. 529-36; cf. N. Pevsner and E. Hubbard, *Ches.* 225, 254-5, 276.

¹⁷ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/8, pp. 422-4; EDA 2/10, pp. 184-6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* EDA 2/11, pp. 1-124, 239-40, 518-21; EDA 2/12, pp. 290-5, 430-2; EDA 2/13, pp. 21-3, 81-5, 248-50; F. H. Crossley, 'Post Reformation Ch. Bldg. in Ches.' *J.C.A.S.* xxxv. 30-1.

¹⁹ M. H. Port, *600 New Churches*, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 80, 88, 132-4.

²¹ *Ibid.* 40, 50, 59, 65-8; N. Pevsner, *S. Lancs.* 29.

²² *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 88.

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means, their founders often working along the lines laid down by the commissioners, even to the extent of employing the same architects.²³ Such almsgiving, however, was insufficient, and it was increasingly necessary to rely upon pew rents to raise funds, especially for the endowment of livings, a cause which never attracted the same degree of generosity as church-building itself. In 1779 Bishop Cleaver called attention to 'the lack of gratuitous room . . . for the lower classes', but little could be done until the passage of Peel's Act of 1843.²⁴

Education continued to be regarded as a most important means of reaching the godless poor. Sunday schools grew in number,²⁵ and with the foundation of the National Society the bishops showed greater appreciation of the role of institutional education and relaxed their demands for clerical catechism in church.²⁶ In 1814 Bishop Law particularly commended the Madras system, with its provision for education in the established religion, and suggested it be 'engrafted' into already established schools. He also noted the opportunities afforded by the many schools kept by the poorer clergy to supplement their income.²⁷ His successor, who had similar views about the usefulness of clerically supervised National schools, emphasized too the role of Sunday schools even where day schools had been established.²⁸

For those whom the National schools could not reach, the S.P.C.K. provided some aids. In 1812 the Society established a diocesan committee in Chester,²⁹ and in 1814 Law recommended his clergy to support the Society rather than its rival, the non-denominational British and Foreign Bible Society. He urged the establishment of district committees to extend its activities, in the hope that 'there need not be a parish . . . where the Bible, Book of Common Prayer, and sound tracts of religious learning may not be very generally distributed.'³⁰ In 1820 he also suggested the establishment of parish lending libraries under the supervision of the local minister as an effective means to check blasphemy and sedition.³¹ His successor with characteristic energy extended the scope of the activities of the S.P.C.K. diocesan committee, seeking to increase its funds and publicize its aims. Under his presidency Bibles, tracts, and prayer books were distributed in local prisons and hospitals, and grants were made to lending libraries in National schools.³²

Porteous was especially anxious to raise clerical standards and thoroughly to supervise the quality of candidates for holy orders, aims pursued with more or less vigour by his successors. In 1778 the problems analysed by Peploe thirty years before were still very much present. Even in Cheshire where there were fewer poor livings than elsewhere in the diocese, nearly 30 per cent of the beneficed clergy lacked degrees, and in the smaller livings the proportion was almost half.³³ In his charge of that year Porteous insisted on the need for higher educational standards, demanding knowledge of Greek, ecclesiastical history, and the differences between the established church, Roman Catholicism, and dissent. He stressed the importance of the studies peculiar to the profession, of which he feared that even many graduates might be ignorant.³⁴ In 1783 he issued a reading list for non-graduate ordinands recommending 'a few cheap and common books', including Secker's *Lectures on the*

²³ e.g. St. Mary's, Birkenhead, where the donor employed Thos. Rickman as architect: Ches. R.O., EDA 2/14, pp. 266-7; Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 81.

²⁴ Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 89.

²⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/2-7.

²⁶ Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799; Majendie, *Charge*, 1804; below.

²⁷ Law, *Charge*, 1814.

²⁸ Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

²⁹ Ches. R.O., EDD 18, S.P.C.K. dioc. cttee. min. bk. p. 1.

³⁰ Law, *Charge*, 1814.

³¹ Law, *Charge*, 1820.

³² Ches. R.O., EDD 18.

³³ *Ibid.* EDV 7/1; *Alum. Cantab. to 1751; 1752-1900; Alum. Oxon. 1715-1886.*

³⁴ Porteous, *Charge*, 1778.

Catechism, Burnet's *Exposition of the 39 Articles*, Pearson on the Creed, and the Greek text of the Gospels and Acts.³⁵ The examination instituted by Bishop Keene was also continued, and candidates were required to supply details of their education and occupation since leaving school, and to undergo oral questioning, some examiners even insisting upon translations from Greek into Latin, and from Grotius and the Greek New Testament into English.³⁶ Even though standards improved little during Porteous' own episcopate, and only about 40 per cent of those whom he ordained were graduates,³⁷ his injunctions eventually produced some effect, and by the end of the century the parish clergy were expected to be better educated. The proportion of graduates rose and a minimum standard of education was demanded of non-graduates, for whom Cleaver in 1791 compiled a lengthy reading list,³⁸ and Law in 1817 founded a theological college at St. Bees (Cumb.).³⁹ Even so Blomfield commented in 1824 on the need to raise the 'tone and character' of examinations in the diocese, and found it necessary to reject two of the thirty candidates at his first ordination and to set new standards of strictness thereafter by refusing to ordain any except graduates and students of St. Bees.⁴⁰

With the raising of educational standards went a stricter control of appointments. In directions issued in 1781, Porteous emphasized that only those in priests' orders could be licensed to a chapelry or perpetual curacy, that no ordinand was to be under the canonical age of 23 years, and that clergy who appointed assistant curates were to give their full reasons for doing so.⁴¹ In 1783 he issued further instructions requiring candidates for orders to provide testimonials of good life and behaviour for the previous three years, the titles upon which they were to be ordained, and certificates giving notice that their intention to offer themselves for holy orders had been properly publicized in the church of the parish where they lived. They were to present themselves at the place of ordination three or four days before the appointed day to go through the 'requisite examination.' Such safeguards could only be effective if the parish clergy played their part and took the provision of testimonials with proper seriousness. Particularly in need of careful consideration were the credentials of candidates for the poorest appointments, some of whom had never been ordained and presented false letters of orders, and many of whom moved rapidly from one post to another, sometimes staying only a few months and resigning without going through the proper forms. In an attempt to cope with the problem, Porteous required his clergy never to accept a curate without previously informing the bishop of his name and character, and insisted that every minister licensed to a chapelry should remain there for at least two years and only relinquish it by a written instrument duly executed before a notary and tendered to the ordinary.⁴² Porteous had some success in enforcing the minimum tenure upon curates and the age requirement upon candidates for ordination.⁴³ Nevertheless, his successors had also to address themselves to similar matters; Bishop Law, for example, in 1814 warned his clergy to exercise 'the strictest inquiry and caution' over testimonials,⁴⁴ and Bishop Blomfield, who was especially severe, rigorously inspected title, required a personal interview and three months' notice from

³⁵ Porteous, *Directions relating to Orders, Institutions, Licences, etc.* (1783); cf. Porteous, *Charge*, 1778, p. 10.

³⁶ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 137-9.

³⁷ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/8; Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 142.

³⁸ W. Cleaver, *List of Bks. intended for Use of younger Clergy* (1791).

³⁹ D.N.B.

⁴⁰ Blomfield, *Memoir*, 75-6.

⁴¹ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 132.

⁴² Porteous, *Directions*, 1783.

⁴³ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 143.

⁴⁴ Law, *Charge*, 1814.

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candidates presenting themselves for ordination, and refused to ordain any who had been in the armed services or in trade.⁴⁵

The most important item in the new code of clerical conduct was residence. Absenteeism remained a problem throughout the 18th century. In 1778 over 40 per cent of benefices in Cheshire had no resident incumbent, and a further 11 per cent only a partial resident.⁴⁶ Incumbents generally excused themselves on the grounds of no parsonage house, or inadequate stipend, but other factors were probably also at work; the highest proportion of absentees in Cheshire was to be found in the remote rural deaneries of Malpas, Nantwich, and Macclesfield, while the more populous middle-income parishes of the Chester deanery had least.⁴⁷ Porteous, who stressed the need for 'pastoral residence upon cures', recommended those holding in plurality to divide their time equally between their livings, and threatened absentees possessed of only one benefice with ecclesiastical censure and pecuniary penalties.⁴⁸ He had little success, however, and in 1789 at least one-third of Cheshire livings still lacked a resident incumbent.⁴⁹

Non-residence diminished in the early 19th century as government legislation began to take effect.⁵⁰ The earliest parliamentary returns, which put the number of absentees in the diocese at between 230 and 270, give an unnecessarily bad impression since they include ministers who although they resided outside their parishes lived near enough to fulfil their duties.⁵¹ Indeed, within ten years of the 1803 Residence Act Bishop Law publicly announced that few incumbents in his diocese could fairly be described as non-resident, and in 1825 Bishop Blomfield was also complimentary about the exceptionally high proportion of resident clergymen.⁵²

The poverty of many benefices remained an important cause of absenteeism, despite the activity of Queen Anne's Bounty, which by 1789 had spent £175,000 in augmenting the incomes of almost half the livings of Cheshire, many of them more than once.⁵³ In 1809, at a time when the Bounty had fixed £150 a year as a desirable minimum, there remained nearly 300 livings in the diocese valued at less than £100 a year, of which 88 were worth not more than £50.⁵⁴ Although the see benefited substantially from government grants made annually between 1809 and 1816, and from the renewed activity of the Bounty,⁵⁵ in 1816 there were still 69 benefices in Cheshire alone, more than half the total, valued at less than £150 a year,⁵⁶ and in 1825 Blomfield complained that a majority of the livings in the diocese as a whole were insufficiently endowed.⁵⁷ Similar difficulties were posed by the lack of parsonage houses. In 1778 Porteous claimed that much had been done in the previous decades and drew attention to the recent Act enabling incumbents to raise money by a mortgage on their benefices.⁵⁸ Despite that encouragement over a quarter of Cheshire livings had no parsonage in 1789,⁵⁹ and few were built before the end of the century.⁶⁰ Even after the revival of the Bounty's interest in the matter

⁴⁵ Blomfield, *Memoir*, 76.

⁴⁶ Only just under a quarter of all incumbents were absentees; many held in plurality.

⁴⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1.

⁴⁸ Porteous, *Charge*, 1778.

⁴⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/2.

⁵⁰ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 200-3.

⁵¹ *Returns relative to the Clergy*, H.C. 209-12, pp. 1-23 (1808), ix; *Returns relative to Residence of Clergy*, H.C. 234, pp. 1-9 (1809), ix; *Abstract of No. and Classes of Non-Resident Incumbents*, H.C. 114 (1812-13), xiii, MS. pp. 48-9.

⁵² Law, *Charge*, 1814; Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825. There were, nevertheless, still substantial numbers of non-resident

clergymen: Ches. R.O., EDV 7/7.

⁵³ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1-2, 4; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i, *passim*.

⁵⁴ *Livings under £150 p.a.*, H.C. 240 (1809), ix, MS. pp. 37-8; Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 203-4, 213-14.

⁵⁵ *Livings under £150 p.a.*; *Returns respecting Non-Residence*, H.C. 273 (1810), xiv, MS. pp. 95-7; *Acct. of Poor Livings*, H.C. 290 (1817), xv, MS. pp. 160-1; Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 205-6, 213 sqq.

⁵⁶ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 79.

⁵⁷ Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

⁵⁸ Porteous, *Charge*, 1778, p. 16.

⁵⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/2.

⁶⁰ Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 68-9.

after 1811, relatively few new parsonages were built,⁶¹ and in 1817 there were still 97 benefices in the diocese in which the minister did not reside because of the lack of a suitable house.⁶²

Even more difficult to remedy was the condition of stipendiary curates, about 120 of whom were employed in the diocese in 1811.⁶³ A certain ambiguity was noticeable in the bishops' pronouncements on those unfortunates; they were regarded as temporary auxiliaries, who would be rendered redundant by the successful operation of the Residence Act, and it was not thought necessary to demand the full stipends allowed by parliament.⁶⁴ Even after the passage of Harrowby's Curates Act in 1813, which took £80 a year as the minimum stipend for curates, unless the benefice itself was worth less, Law could note with satisfaction that the curates of his diocese had no cause for complaint since their average stipend was £71 a year. He believed that it was necessary to maintain the incumbent's position, since the curate's was only 'an occasional and temporary employment.'⁶⁵ As the regulation that all curates should be episcopally licensed was generally evaded, and as there were many needy clergy ready to underbid one another, such views prevailed, and Harrowby's Act was of only limited effect.⁶⁶ Indeed, even when the bishop did attempt to ensure the curate a reasonable stipend his demands were flouted; at Stockport St. Peter's in 1825, for example, the perpetual curate acknowledged that although Law had in 1823 licensed his curate with a yearly salary of £75, he continued to pay him only £50.⁶⁷

The personal behaviour of the clergy was scrutinized ever more thoroughly. Porteous required diligence in study, personal contact with parishioners, and sobriety in dress.⁶⁸ Cleaver urged the importance of an exemplary life, 'to obviate every pretence' that dissenting ministers possessed 'more piety in their devotion, more zeal in their instructions, or more industry in their personal labours' than the clergy of the established church.⁶⁹ Law echoed the point.⁷⁰ By the 1820s Blomfield, with characteristic thoroughness, had much more specific requirements; the clergy were to dress in appropriately sombre clothing, and were not to engage in secular employment or in field-sports; a promise to abstain from fox-hunting was extracted from curates before they were granted a licence.⁷¹

In one respect at least, however, the clergy fulfilled their obligations satisfactorily. Divine service was celebrated with surprising frequency. In Cheshire in 1778 over 80 per cent of churches had two services every Sunday, nearly half had additional services on holy days or on weekdays during Lent, a few had services throughout the year on Wednesdays and Fridays, and two (St. Peter's, Chester, and St. Michael's, Macclesfield) had daily worship. Only one church in Cheshire had less than four communions yearly, and over half had six or more. Almost a third had celebrations at least every month, and in one church, St. Martin's, Chester, there was a celebration every three weeks. In the major churches of the diocese, the cathedral, Manchester collegiate church, and Liverpool parish church, prayers were said daily and the eucharist frequently celebrated.⁷² Such standards were maintained in the

⁶¹ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 216–19; Ches. R.O., EDP 18/6; EDP 87/4; EDA 2/13, pp. 19–21, 242–7.

⁶² *No. of Benefices*, H.C. 370 (1817), xv, MS. pp. 175–7.

⁶³ *No. of Resident and Licensed Curates*, H.C. 115 (1812–13), xiii, MS. p. 51.

⁶⁴ e.g. Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799; Majendie, *Charge*, 1804.

⁶⁵ Law, *Charge*, 1814; cf. *No. of Resident and Licensed Curates*, H.C. 257 (1812), x, MS. p. 157.

⁶⁶ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, 207–9.

⁶⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/7/445.

⁶⁸ Porteous, *Charge*, 1778.

⁶⁹ Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799.

⁷⁰ Law, *Charge*, 1817.

⁷¹ Blomfield, *Memoir*, 74–9.

⁷² At Manchester there was a weekly eucharist: Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1.

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succeeding decades, and the bishops generally were satisfied with the number of services performed in their see.⁷³ The figures indeed compare favourably with those for other dioceses, and the Chester clergy may be said to have performed that part of their duty well.⁷⁴

Other duties, however, were treated more perfunctorily. Instruction in, and exposition of, the catechism, in contravention of the 59th canon, was generally practised in the summer months, or during Lent, sometimes for only a few Sundays in the year.⁷⁵ In 1799 Cleaver lamented that attention to the catechism had been declining throughout the kingdom for over a century, and announced his intention of reprinting Nowell's abridgement of the Elizabethan original for the general use of his clergy.⁷⁶ Majendie also demanded diligence in catechizing, after the returns to his inquiries had shown that some of the clergy even in urban parishes devoted only one or two Sundays a year to instruction, or catechized merely before confirmation. The ultimate responsibility was theirs, even though they might accept the assistance of local schoolmasters and Sunday school instructors, and they were required not to dispense with public catechism in church.⁷⁷ In the 1820s Blomfield set new standards: instruction was to be practised continually in church and school, and was not to consist merely in hearing pupils repeat the answers to the catechism by rote, but to involve a frequent examination of their proficiency in scripture and an attempt to explain the texts upon which the catechism was founded.⁷⁸

Confirmation itself was administered to very large groups at what were perhaps often rather undignified services. At his primary visitation of 1778 Porteous confirmed nearly 30,000 candidates,⁷⁹ and the habit of confirming very large groups continued well into the 19th century; Bishop Sparke, for example, confirmed 8,000 children in Manchester in a single day during his visitation, and, despite his predecessor's contention that by 1820 the ceremony was conducted with much 'regularity and decorum', Bishop Blomfield was still confirming on a similar scale in the 1820s.⁸⁰ Even as late as 1829 Bishop Sumner complained of deficiencies in the rite, and particularly of the custom of confirming children of tender years who did not go on to become regular communicants.⁸¹

A consequence of inadequate catechism and indiscriminate confirmation was an imperfect understanding of the sacraments. Communion in particular was felt to be badly understood, and often received only to comply with social or legal requirements. In 1778, even in rural areas, on average fewer than one member of each household took communion at Easter, the best attended celebration of the year. Communion seems to have been regarded as for the exceptionally devout rather than for church members as a whole, and only in the biggest towns, such as Manchester and Liverpool, were there large congregations of regular and reasonably frequent communicants.⁸² The number of communicants may even have declined in the early 19th century, despite the exhortations of the bishops, who repeatedly urged the clergy to regard communion figures as the 'proper index' of the faith of a parish.⁸³ Bishop Cleaver in particular was anxious to promote a proper regard for the

⁷³ Ibid. EDV 7/2-6; Majendie, *Charge*, 1804, 25-6; Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825, 7-8.

⁷⁴ J. Addy, 'Bp. Porteous's Visitation of Dioc. of Chester, 1778', *Northern Hist.* xiii. 185-6.

⁷⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1-2 *Northern Hist.* xiii. 186-7.

⁷⁶ Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799.

⁷⁷ Majendie, *Charge*, 1804; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/3.

⁷⁸ Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

⁷⁹ Lamb. Palace Libr. MS. 2099; *Northern Hist.* xiii. 187; Porteous, *Letter . . . concerning Sunday Schools*.

⁸⁰ Blomfield, *Memoir*, 72, 75; Law, *Charge*, 1820, p. 14.

⁸¹ J. B. Sumner, *Charge*, 1829, 30-1.

⁸² Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1; *Northern Hist.* xiii. 186.

⁸³ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 81-2; Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799; Majendie, *Charge*, 1804.

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eucharist, seeking to foster in his flock 'a true notion' of its sacrificial nature, and to persuade them that it was indispensable to salvation.⁸⁴ Such sentiments were endorsed by his successors, who stressed that the eucharist should be diligently explained to the people and that they should be urged to frequent communion.⁸⁵

In other spheres, too, the bishops sought to impose new standards. They deplored the increase in private baptism and churching of women, and warned the clergy not to make invidious distinctions between rich and poor, but to administer the sacraments in accordance with the rubrics.⁸⁶ In particular, they were increasingly anxious to ensure the observance of the forms prescribed in the Prayer Book and the proper administration of the elements. Cleaver found that one in six of the clergy habitually disregarded the rubric and followed the dissenting custom of pronouncing the words of administration over a group of communicants rather than separately to each.⁸⁷ Earlier laxity was used to justify the practice: Markham, for example, was alleged to have authorized at Nantwich the pronouncing of the words to a 'rail-full',⁸⁸ and it proved very difficult to eliminate, eliciting further condemnations from Law and Blomfield in the 1820s.⁸⁹

The persistence of such laxity was associated with sympathy with nonconformity, which by the late 18th century was forcing itself upon the notice of the establishment in a new form. Evangelicalism, with its generally friendly relations with dissent, had appeared in the diocese by the 1770s, at Macclesfield under the patronage of the Roe family. There James Roe, prime curate 1756–65, tolerated the Methodists, although he never invited Wesley to preach in his church,⁹⁰ and there too David Simpson, a friend of Wesley's, was appointed second curate in 1772. Simpson was ejected after a terrible quarrel with the incumbent, who attacked him and threw him from the pulpit while he was preaching,⁹¹ but he remained at Macclesfield, and although denied the prime curacy in 1778 because of his Methodist sympathies, was in the following year appointed as first incumbent of a church recently founded by James Roe's brother Charles.⁹² He achieved such success that on Good Friday 1782 he had over 1,300 communicants.⁹³ The new movement was tolerated by Porteous, who, even though he was not himself an evangelical, licensed Simpson to the new living,⁹⁴ but later bishops were more hostile. Law complained of the growing spirit of itinerancy among the clergy, and condemned the 'pernicious tendency' of many of the hymns lately introduced into his churches, especially the 'irreverent familiarity' of their references to Christ. Blomfield attacked the delegation of pastoral duties to 'intruders' and denounced itinerant and unlicensed preachers as 'paving the way to secession'.⁹⁵ The attempt to enforce the rubric upon the administration of the elements was also aimed against the Evangelicals, whose notoriety rendered odious to stiff churchmen a practice which they had hitherto merely considered improper.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, although Wesley was invited to preach at Christ Church, Macclesfield, he received no such hospitality elsewhere in the county, and Evangelicalism was relatively slow to establish itself among the clergy of the diocese, until encouraged by Sumner in the 1830s.⁹⁷ Methodism itself, however, made rapid

⁸⁴ Cleaver, *Sermons*, 1787–9.

⁸⁵ e.g. Majendie, *Charge*, 1804.

⁸⁶ Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799; Majendie, *Charge*, 1804; Law, *Charge*, 1820; Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

⁸⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/2.

⁸⁸ Ibid. EDV 7/2/59.

⁸⁹ Law, *Charge*, 1820; Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

⁹⁰ *Hist. Macclesfield*, ed. C. Stella Davies, 330–1.

⁹¹ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 506–7; G. R. Balleine, *Hist. of*

Evangelical Party in Ch. of Eng. (new edn. 1951), 64.

⁹² Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 506–7; *D.N.B.*

⁹³ Balleine, *Evangelical Party*, 64.

⁹⁴ *D.N.B.* s.v. Porteous; Ches. R.O., EDA 1/8, ff. 16, 29.

⁹⁵ Law, *Charge*, 1814; *Charge*, 1820; Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

⁹⁶ Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825, 22–3.

⁹⁷ Balleine, *Evangelical Party*, 64, 158–60.

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progress amongst the laity and soon excited grave alarm in the established church. Incumbents expressed fears as early as 1778, and were seriously alarmed by 1799 when the bishop himself commented upon the 'extraordinary increase in dissenting congregations.'⁹⁸ Their fears were intensified by the fact that Methodism did not simply make converts among the irreligious poor, but tempted away conscientious and active members of the church. In Macclesfield, for example, the incumbent of St. Michael's complained that the Methodists had proselytized every young person with a serious sense of religion and left him with few 'religious characters'.⁹⁹ The decline in the number of communicants in the early decades of the 19th century is thus probably attributable to their vitality.¹

Recusants caused less anxiety in the diocese, although their numbers caused the bishops some alarm.² In 1781 Porteous had to defend himself in the House of Lords against a charge initiated by Earl Ferrers that there had been a very considerable increase in the number of Roman Catholics in his see. The bishop dismissed the allegation on the grounds that the increase was small in comparison with the increase in the population as a whole, and denied that Roman Catholics sought to make converts, citing the example of a papist priest who had been converted to the established church.³ Nevertheless, in 1781 he issued a *Confutation of the Errors of Rome*, addressed to the clergy and inhabitants of his diocese,⁴ and he and his successors also inquired into the numbers and conduct of Roman Catholics at their visitations.⁵

A significant hindrance to all attempts to deal with the diocese's manifold problems was the poverty of its endowments, which caused almost all the 18th-century bishops to regard the see merely as a stepping-stone to better rewarded dignities. Between the death of Peploe in 1752 and the accession of Sumner in 1828 the average duration of an episcopate was 9½ years, and all the eight bishops were translated to richer sees.⁶ Keene's total yearly revenue in his last years at Chester averaged just over £1,600, including over £650 derived from occasional sources, especially the renewal of leases which were almost always for three lives.⁷ The regular income from leases, fee farms, deanery rents, pensions, procurations and synodals, and impropriations was only about £800, with a further £160 from 1767 from the rectory of Waverton, which had been annexed to the bishopric by an Act of 1755 as compensation for the revenue lost by the abolition of mortuaries.⁸

Keene's immediate successors were further impoverished by a decline in the occasional revenue derived from fines, which averaged about £620 a year under Markham, and a mere £400 under Porteous. Porteous also suffered a decline in his net income, which dropped to an average of £913 during his episcopate, because of an increase in his annual disbursements, in particular the taxes payable on the bishop's palace and several of the rectory houses. Expenses, however, remained high. The bishops had to maintain their traditional hospitality and their palace, and make occasional subsidies to clerical charities.⁹ In such circumstances it remained

⁹⁸ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/96, 133; Cleaver, *Charge*, 1799.

⁹⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/3/33.

¹ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 82.

² Addy, 'Two 18th-Cent. Bps.' 91, 212.

³ Lamb. Palace Libr. MS. 2099; R. Hodgson, *Life of Beilby Porteous*, 64–9.

⁴ Published in London as *A Brief Confutation of the Errors of the Church of Rome*.

⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1–7.

⁶ *Handbk. of Brit. Chronology*, 215.

⁷ Ches. R.O., DBE 53. Where no other source is given the inf. in these paragraphs is derived from J. H. E. Bennett, 'Revenues and Disbursements of Bps. of Chester', *T.H.S.L.C.* xcvi. 76–106.

⁸ Ches. R.O., DBE 53; EDA 2/6, pp. 184a–184b. Mortuaries were payments resulting from the commutation of the bishop's ancient right to first choice of the goods of every deceased incumbent in the diocese.

⁹ *Ibid.* DBE 53.

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necessary to supplement their relatively exiguous income by holding other benefices *in commendam*. Markham was a great pluralist; Peploe held the wardenship of Manchester College for almost half of his episcopate; Keene held the rich rectory of Stanhope (co. Dur.) until 1770; and Porteous retained the rectory of Hunton (Kent).¹⁰

In the first decade of the 19th century additional income was derived not only from entry fines but also from the sale of timber on episcopal property. The bishops then enjoyed an average annual income of almost £4,000,¹¹ but after 1815, when timber-felling ceased, their revenues again declined. Blomfield, with his high notions of episcopal status, was especially conscious of the inadequacy of the endowments, and was forced to rely upon the income from his rich living of St. Botolph's, Bishopgate.¹²

Despite all the improvements initiated in the early decades of reform, much still remained to be done in 1828. Although a start had been made in providing extra church accommodation there was still a great need for more free seating.¹³ The new churches generally levied pew rents to help pay for upkeep and stipends, and only occasionally set aside free seats for the poor. St. Peter's, Stockport, for example, set rents at 4–8s. a quarter for pews and 1s. for seats. The new galleries and seating erected on an ever larger scale in the older churches were also generally rented or sold.¹⁴ Recognizing the need the bishops were reluctantly brought to sanction the innovation of evening services for the benefit of the poor, but that was hardly an adequate response.¹⁵ Other difficulties were imposed by the nature of the diocesan administration. Responsibility for the upkeep of ecclesiastical buildings, for example, fell directly upon the bishop, in the absence of effective archdeacons, and as a result supervision at the parish level was inadequate and many buildings were in a dilapidated state or inadequately restored. Blomfield hoped to bring improvement by appointing commissaries with authority to visit churches and glebe houses and to order the necessary repairs, but his episcopate was very brief and nothing appears to have been done.¹⁶ The numbers and condition of the poor clergy continued to cause concern. In the 1820s even in relatively prosperous Cheshire there were still curates and beneficed incumbents with stipends of under £50 a year.¹⁷ Blomfield planned to replace the diocesan and local charities concerned by a general fund, but nothing was done for nearly 50 years.¹⁸ Moreover, even after half a century of consciousness of the need for reform, and despite the best efforts of Law and Blomfield, the standard of the clergy still left much to be desired. Blomfield's correspondence during his brief episcopate reflects a growing despondency. In letters to friends written shortly after his arrival in Chester he lamented the 'many sad evils' of the diocese, the 'almost numberless' matters requiring rectification. Discipline was 'sadly relaxed' and he was aware of a 'want of spirit' in religious affairs generally. Chester remained one of the least desirable of English sees and he left it without regret.¹⁹

¹⁰ Various articles in *D.N.B.*

¹¹ Ches. R.O., DBE 53.

¹² Blomfield, *Memoir*, 69–70.

¹³ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/6, p. 370; EDA 2/7, ff. 7v.–8, 79v.–80; EDA 2/8, pp. 23–4, 440–1; EDA 2/9, pp. 118–19, 152–3; EDA 2/10, p. 98; EDA 2/13, pp. 83–5.

¹⁴ e.g. *ibid.* EDA 2/6, pp. 141–2, 143–4, 284–5, 328–30,

398, 450–2, 527–9, 566–7, 569–71; EDA 2/7, ff. 43–44v., 45v.–46.

¹⁵ Law, *Charge*, 1820.

¹⁶ Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825.

¹⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/7; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i, annotations.

¹⁸ Blomfield, *Charge*, 1825; below.

¹⁹ Blomfield, *Memoir*, 73–81.

1828-1919

Blomfield was replaced by John Bird Sumner (1828-48), very different in character from his immediate predecessors;²⁰ Sumner was generally regarded as a leader of the liberal, Evangelical school, and his prominence caused him to be attacked with especial severity by its opponents. In 1842 his views were criticized by the High Church Phillpotts, bishop of Exeter, and soon afterwards a tract published by the S.P.C.K. condemned his interpretation of the doctrine of justification as 'ultra-Lutheran and sectarian'.²¹ He was, nevertheless, a conscientious and successful diocesan, and in 1843 his zeal in promoting the work of church extension elicited a glowing tribute from Sir Robert Peel.²² In 1848 he was translated to Canterbury and succeeded at Chester by a much less controversial figure, John Graham (1848-65), who carried on the church-building programme and tried to maintain peace amongst his clergy in the difficult mid-century decades.²³

By 1828 Chester was one of the largest sees in England with a population approaching two million.²⁴ Although the creation in 1836 of the see of Ripon absorbed the greater part of the archdeaconry of Richmond, by 1840 its population had probably again reached that figure.²⁵ In 1839 the government determined upon the creation of a new diocese at Manchester as soon as room could be made on the episcopal bench by the amalgamation of two extant sees.²⁶ The new bishopric was finally created in 1847, and the deanery of Bangor was at the same time assigned to the diocese of St. Asaph,²⁷ leaving Chester with a population of nearly 1,200,000.²⁸ Further curtailment took place in 1849, when the peculiar of Hawarden was also transferred to St. Asaph, and in 1856, when on the death of Bishop Percy, the deaneries of Copeland, Furness, Cartmel, and parts of the deaneries of Kendal and Kirby Lonsdale were transferred to Carlisle. The reduced see consisted of Cheshire and the deanery of Warrington, except for the parish of Leigh (Lancs.).²⁹

During the same period the diocese also benefited from improvements in its internal arrangements. In 1843 the deaneries of Blackburn, Manchester, Leyland, and Warrington were erected into the new archdeaconry of Manchester,³⁰ and in 1847, on the creation of the new see, the archdeaconry of Liverpool was created from the deaneries of Wirral and Warrington.³¹ The evils of the old decanal system, condemned by Bishop Blomfield, although not eliminated, were mitigated by reducing the size of the archdeaconries and assigning the rural deans' powers to the appropriate archdeacon, who thereby acquired 'jurisdiction' over his deaneries.³²

The new episcopate opened controversially when in 1829 Sumner voted with a minority of his colleagues in the Lords for the removal of Catholic disabilities, thereby affronting, as he himself admitted, the sentiments of a large majority of his clergy before he had had time to establish himself in their confidence.³³ That vote was followed by an equally controversial stance on the early stages of the Reform Bill, when Sumner again aligned himself with the liberal minority.³⁴ Within his own

²⁰ D.N.B.; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1895), 166-8.

²¹ S.P.C.K. *Tract* 619, p. 15; H. Phillpotts, *Charge*, 1842.

²² 68 *Parl. Deb.* 3rd ser. 1287.

²³ D.N.B.

²⁴ J. B. Sumner, *Charge*, 1835.

²⁵ Sumner, *Charge*, 1841.

²⁶ 1st *Gen. Rep. of Eccl. Com.* H.C. 35, p. 11 (1846), xxiv.

²⁷ *Ches. R.O.*, EDD 13/5/22.

²⁸ *Census Rep.: Religious Worship (Eng. and Wales)*, H.C. 1690, p. ccli (1852-3), lxxxix.

²⁹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 97; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1895), 166-7.

³⁰ 1st *Gen. Rep. Eccl. Com.* p. 66.

³¹ *Ches. R.O.*, EDD 13/5/22.

³² *Ibid.* EDA 2/17, pp. 604-5; EDD 13/5/22.

³³ J. B. Sumner, *Letter to Clergy of Dioc. of Chester* (1829), 1-2. The criticisms which Sumner drew upon himself were answered by one of his clergy: *Reply of 'Presbyter Cestriensis' to Dr. Stonard's Letter* (1829).

³⁴ O. Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* i. 18.

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diocese Sumner was similarly bold, recognizing immediately the need for a substantial increase in church accommodation, which in the 1820s had barely kept pace with the growth in population.³⁵ His zeal achieved remarkable results. In all, 223 new churches were built in the diocese between 1829 and 1848, and a further 17 rebuilt, compared with 54 new churches and 18 rebuildings during the previous 17 years. His successor, Graham, carried on the work, and a further 112 churches were erected before he died in 1865.³⁶ They were much needed. Even as late as 1851 the diocese had enough sittings for only a quarter of its population, and in many of the industrial towns the proportion was much lower.³⁷ In Stockport, indeed, there were only 9,000 sittings for a population of nearly 54,000, and in Macclesfield 7,500 for a population of 39,000.³⁸

The funds for the new churches came from various sources. The Church Building Commissioners, for example, who had built only one church in Cheshire with the grant of 1818, built 21 from that of 1825, most of them during Sumner's episcopate.³⁹ Aid came also from the Incorporated Church Building Society, a district committee of which had been established at Liverpool in 1828, and by 1837 the diocese had received 132 grants worth over £27,000 from that source.⁴⁰ In 1835 Sumner founded a diocesan Church Building Society, which in the first ten years of its life raised £8,750 to promote church building in the populous manufacturing towns.⁴¹ By far the greater part of the funds, however, was raised locally: in 1839, for example, well over two-thirds of the annual expenditure on church building came from local contributions; only 11 per cent came from the Commissioners and the Church Building Societies and a further 28 per cent from other trusts and 'public' organizations.⁴² Occasionally a church rate was used to raise funds, but voluntary subscriptions were much more common.⁴³ In Cheshire only certain industrial towns in the east of the county such as Stockport and Dukinfield proved reluctant to subscribe to new churches.⁴⁴

The new churches were to be the centres of new pastoral units, generally 'districts' at least nominally subordinate to the mother-church rather than fully autonomous parishes.⁴⁵ By 1861 Sumner and Graham, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church Building Commissioners had created 84 new districts in Cheshire alone.⁴⁶ The principal difficulty lay in funding the new livings; it was still easier to raise money for church building than for ministers' stipends. In 1831 a new Act attempted to solve the problem by enabling the bishop to assign the patronage of new livings in perpetuity to their founders, provided that they had secured for them an endowment of at least £100, and by 1851 under its provisions 74 churches had been built in the diocese, 17 of them in Cheshire.⁴⁷ Even so, as Sumner himself quickly recognized, the Act could not work in the poorest areas of the manufacturing towns, where there was no chance of collecting pew rents to the annual value of £100.⁴⁸ When provision for such districts was made in 1843 by Peel's Church Endowment Act, which ensured that some at least of the new churches would be entirely free, the effects

³⁵ Sumner, *Charge*, 1829; *Charge*, 1832.

³⁶ Ches. R.O., EDR 9/42.

³⁷ *Census Rep.: Relig. Worship*, p. ccli. A further 19 churches made no returns. For Ches. alone the proportion was slightly better, with over 118,000 sittings for a pop. of 423,500: *ibid.* p. cclxxvii.

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp. cclv, cclxii, cclxix.

³⁹ Port, 600 *New Churches*, 132, 140.

⁴⁰ *Annual Rep. of Ch. Building Soc.* (1837–8), pp. 3, 14, 33, 60, 66, 74.

⁴¹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1880; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 87–8.

⁴² Sumner, *Charge*, 1841.

⁴³ J. Graham, *Charges* 1859; Ches. R.O., EDR 9/43.

⁴⁴ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 88; H. Heginbotham, *Hist. Stockport*, 210–16, 223–4; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/11, pp. 15–18.

⁴⁵ Ches. R.O., EDR 9/32–4; 2nd *Gen. Rep. Eccl. Com.* H.C. 515, pp. 4, 20–1, 24, 25 (1847), xxxiii.

⁴⁶ Ches. R.O., EDR 9/2.

⁴⁷ *Returns of Districts*, H.C. 896, pp. 2–3 (1852–3), lxxviii; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 88.

⁴⁸ Sumner, *Charge*, 1832.

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were quickly felt in the diocese of Chester. By 1847 agreement had been reached upon the establishment of 52 new districts providing for an aggregate population of over 210,000, and by 1851 ten free churches had been opened in Cheshire alone.⁴⁹ Pew rents nevertheless continued to hinder the church's mission to those in greatest need. By 1851 there were still many more appropriated than free sittings even in towns such as Stockport and Macclesfield.⁵⁰ Only later in the century did the activities of the Free and Open Church Association begin to reverse the trend.⁵¹

Although the great majority of the new churches went to the large manufacturing towns, the agricultural areas were not neglected. Even in the 1830s Bishop Sumner called attention to the needs of rural communities, and by 1838 eighteen chapels had been built in Cheshire to serve them.⁵² That tendency became more pronounced as the century progressed; of the 223 churches built 1829–48 only 56 were in the predominantly rural Cheshire, whereas between 1849 and 1865 Cheshire received 61 of the 112 churches then built in the reduced diocese.⁵³ The new buildings were generally cheaper and less imposing than those built earlier in the century. While Basevi's handsome church of St. Thomas, Stockport, had cost over £25,000,⁵⁴ many of those built thereafter cost much less.⁵⁵ The Commissioners' buildings were inevitably plain. Usually of box-like design, they were fitted with galleries to accommodate congregations as large as possible, and were adorned with only minimal Gothic details.⁵⁶ They were the subject of criticism from the day they were built; even in 1840 they were reviled by stiff churchmen and others as 'devoid of taste and ecclesiastical propriety.' Sumner, their principal progenitor, however, was undeterred, and claimed that they were greatly superior to the majority of older churches.⁵⁷ His defence had effect; despite the criticism, the Commissioners' designs influenced a number of churches built with private funds.⁵⁸ By the later 1840s, however, the Second Pointed style of Gothic had arrived in Cheshire, with the churches built by George Gilbert Scott. Scott's example was followed by the Manchester-based J. S. Crowther, and in Chester as elsewhere in the mid 19th century Gothic was taken seriously and expected to be 'correct.'⁵⁹

Zeal in church extension was accompanied by improved pastoral standards. Eighteenth-century attitudes were slow to disappear among the Chester clergy, dominated as they were, especially in Cheshire, by a strongly entrenched local gentry.⁶⁰ By 1830, however, the outlook condemned by Bishop Blomfield was giving way before the new zeal of the Evangelicals, who after a slow start were at last beginning to make themselves felt in the diocese. Sumner's earliest inquiries as bishop revealed that Evangelical pastoral ideals had already begun to permeate the diocese, and that some clergy were reading and expounding the Scriptures to the sick in their own homes, giving lectures in private houses, and holding 'cottage meetings' on weekday evenings. Unlike his immediate predecessors who had disapproved of such methods, Sumner actively encouraged them.⁶¹ Especially revolutionary was his commendation in his primary charge of lay assistance in pastoral work; the clergy in

⁴⁹ *2nd Gen. Repl. Eccl. Com.* pp. 20–1, 24, 25; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 89.

⁵⁰ *Census Rep.: Relig. Worship*, pp. cclv, cclxii, cclxix.

⁵¹ *Annual Rep. Chester Dioc. Open Ch. Assoc.* (1867).

⁵² Sumner, *Charge*, 1838.

⁵³ Ches. R.O., EDR 9/42.

⁵⁴ Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 340.

⁵⁵ Ches. R.O., EDR 9/43.

⁵⁶ St. Mark's, Bredbury is a relatively large example; other Commissioners' churches incl. Bollington, St. John the Bap-

tist; Dukinfield, St. John, St. Mark; Hyde, St. George, St. Mary; Norbury, St. Thomas; Stalybridge, St. George: Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 108, 113, 202, 236, 245–6, 336.

⁵⁷ Sumner, *Charge*, 1841.

⁵⁸ e.g. Tilstone Fearnall, St. Jude; Hurdsfield, Holy Trinity: Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 31, 245, 363–4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 33–5: cf. Pevsner, *S. Lancs.* 32–3.

⁶⁰ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 78.

⁶¹ Sumner, *Charge*, 1832, pp. xxxii–xxxiv.

the larger parishes were to employ some of their more zealous and educated laymen to act as visitors, providing relief for the sick and needy, encouraging thrift, and seeking generally to improve the moral and religious character of the poor.⁶²

Sumner's attitude undoubtedly had some effect. At Lancaster, for example, a society was established in 1829, to promote 'the temporal comfort and spiritual interests of the labouring classes', by visiting them to read and expound the Scriptures, lending them suitable religious books, and looking after their savings. By 1835 Sumner could claim that where adopted such methods had proved very successful, dismissing charges that they contravened the canons.⁶³ With his encouragement Evangelicals began to gain ground throughout the diocese. In Liverpool the coming of Hugh McNeile to St. Jude's in 1834 started the process that was to make that city a great Evangelical centre; in Manchester Hugh Stowell, whom Blomfield had reluctantly licensed to a curacy in 1828, moved to a new church in Salford in 1831 and thereafter rose to a similar pre-eminence.⁶⁴ Evangelicalism was further diffused through the activities of the Church Pastoral Aid Society, with which Sumner was one of the few bishops to be closely associated, and which made numerous grants to maintain curates and lay assistants in his diocese.⁶⁵ Additional impetus was given to the movement when Sumner sanctioned the setting-up of St. Aidan's College, Birkenhead, an independent establishment for the training of non-graduate ordinands founded in 1846 by Dr. Joseph Baylee, evangelical vicar of Holy Trinity, Birkenhead.⁶⁶

Pastoral zeal, however, was far from being the sole preserve of the Evangelicals. Clerical standards were generally rising, and the old and much condemned abuses of non-residence and pluralism gradually disappeared. In 1832 it was asserted that out of 630 livings in the diocese no more than 20 lacked a clergyman residing within their own boundaries or so near that his duties could be effectively performed.⁶⁷ In 1838 out of 580 churches only 70 were not supervised by their own incumbent,⁶⁸ and by 1850 both abuses had ceased to be a problem.⁶⁹ The clergy, moreover, were now more highly educated than ever before, and the proportion of graduate ordinands was rising steadily to its mid-century peak; in 1841 Sumner ordained 125 candidates, of whom 104 had degrees and 15 had attended St. Bees.⁷⁰ By 1849 the new bishop, Graham, could commend the efficiency of his clergy and the harmony with which they worked together.⁷¹

The new clerical idealism generated by the Tractarians also contributed to the improvement in standards. Tractarianism in its early stages is difficult to detect in the diocese of Chester, hampered as it was by the attitude of Sumner, who in his 1841 charge published an exhaustive condemnation of Tract Ninety.⁷² Graham, too, although much more cautious was far from favourable. He deplored all liturgical innovation and upheld the Gorham judgement, and in 1867 his views were quoted in the Mackonochie case as typifying episcopal hostility to ritualism.⁷³ Nevertheless, the High Church party appears to have gained ground significantly in the diocese by the 1850s, for by then the Additional Curates Society had opened an auxiliary

⁶² Sumner, *Charge*, 1829; 4th *Annual Rep. of General Soc. for Promoting District Visiting* (1832).

⁶³ Sumner, *Charge*, 1832, App. 11; *Charge*, 1835.

⁶⁴ Balleine, *Evangelical Party*, 64, 158-61.

⁶⁵ E. J. Speck, *Ch. Pastoral Aid Soc.* 4, 19, 20, 24, 51-2, 57, 62, 67; Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* i. 449-50; *Rep. Ctee. of Ch. Pastoral Aid Soc.* 1838.

⁶⁶ D.N.B.; F. B. Heiser, *Story of St. Aidan's College, Birkenhead, 1847-1947*, 12-15.

⁶⁷ Sumner, *Charge*, 1832; *Charge*, 1835; *Rep. Eccl.*

Revenue Com. [67], pp. 224, 265, H.C. (1835), xxii.

⁶⁸ Sumner, *Charge*, 1838.

⁶⁹ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 80; *Returns of Dists.* p. 3.

⁷⁰ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/13, pp. 7-8, 35-7, 67-8. Cf. *ibid.* EDA 1/12, ff. 1, 9 and v., 20 and v., 31v.-32, 43 and v.; Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* i. 522-3.

⁷¹ Graham, *Charge*, 1849.

⁷² Sumner, *Charge*, 1841.

⁷³ Graham, *Charge*, 1849, 59; 2nd *Rep. Royal Com. on Ritual*, H.C. 4016, p. 47 (1867-8), xxxviii.

branch there, and the movement for the restoration of Convocation, greatly feared by the Evangelicals as a vehicle of clericalism, had gained a firm foothold. The clergy participated actively in the 1852 elections and complained that the rearrangement of the diocese had left them with inadequate representation. Graham acknowledged their grievance and passed it on to Archbishop Musgrave of York, who was notorious for his hostility to the revival of Convocation's powers, and made only an evasive response. The matter, indeed, remained of purely theoretical importance until Musgrave's death in 1860 opened the way for the restoration of the northern Convocation.⁷⁴

Education was regarded as an important adjunct to the clergy's pastoral work. 'To plant a minister of the church is, in effect, to create a school; he is no sooner appointed to one than he sees the necessity of the other.'⁷⁵ By 1835 the Sunday schools in Lancashire and Cheshire contained at least 120,000 young people, and both Sunday and day schools were rapidly expanding, supported by the government and the National Society.⁷⁶ A diocesan Board of Education was established in 1838 to co-ordinate funds and inspect schools, and a training college was opened at Chester in 1840.⁷⁷ By 1844 education was said to be making rapid progress in the diocese, with the provision of schoolrooms to accommodate a further 20,000 pupils. Nevertheless the investigations of the diocesan inspector revealed that by 1844 less than half the children in the populous towns and only 6 per cent of those in rural districts received daily schooling.⁷⁸ The programme of increasing and enlarging the parish schools aided by private donations and grants from the government and the National Society continued throughout the 1840s and 1850s.⁷⁹

Chester remained a poor see and diocesan finance continued to be a problem. The bishop's income, by 1830 on average only just over £3,250 a year, was well below the level considered desirable by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.⁸⁰ In 1847 it was estimated that to bring it up to the minimum of £4,500 would require an augmentation of £1,100.⁸¹ In the 1840s provision also had to be made for the new archdeaconries. The archdeacons of Chester and Manchester were each granted £100 a year out of the common fund in 1844, and in 1848 the stipend of the new archdeaconry of Liverpool was raised to £150.⁸² The cathedral, too, was in need of government assistance. It had always been poorly endowed,⁸³ and by the middle of the century it was necessary to appeal for funds to restore the cathedral church, parts of which were almost ruinous.⁸⁴ Parish finances had also become more of a problem, with the growth of opposition to church rates. In 1859 Bishop Graham conceded that they had given rise to unseemly contentions and could be levied only voluntarily in towns.⁸⁵ The need to find suitable substitutes remained after the abolition of compulsory church rates in 1868 had brought the grievance to an end.

The parish clergy continued in need of aid. In 1828 Sumner lamented the inadequacy of stipends in the diocese and talked of augmentation, but in 1834 there were still 22 ancient livings in Cheshire alone worth less than £100 a year, 8 of which were worth as little as £45-£60.⁸⁶ The new benefices also raised problems;

⁷⁴ Graham, *Charge*, 1853; Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* ii. 315-16.

⁷⁵ Sumner, *Charge*, 1838, 14.

⁷⁶ Sumner, *Charge*, 1835; *Charge*, 1838.

⁷⁷ F. Jacobson, *Charge*, 1880; *Annual Rep. of Dioc. Bd. of Educ.* (1842); J. L. Bradbury, *Chester Coll.* 40-80.

⁷⁸ Sumner, *Charge*, 1844.

⁷⁹ Graham, *Charge*, 1849; *Charge*, 1853.

⁸⁰ *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xvii. 77; *Rep. Eccl. Revenue Com.* pp. 4-5.

⁸¹ *2nd Gen. Rep. Eccl. Com.* pp. 9-10.

⁸² *1st Gen. Rep. Eccl. Com.* p. 68; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/17, pp. 682-3; EDA 2/19, pp. 504-2.

⁸³ *1st Gen. Rep. Eccl. Com.* pp. 14-15.

⁸⁴ Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* ii. 368; F. Bennett, *Chester Cathedral*, 46-7.

⁸⁵ Graham, *Charge*, 1859.

⁸⁶ Sumner, *Charge*, 1829; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i (annotations).

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their permanent endowments were generally small, leaving their incumbents dependent on 'the uncertain and fluctuating source' of pew rents.⁸⁷ To remedy the problem the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty, and, from 1854, the Diocesan Church Building Society pursued a steady policy of augmentation. By 1845, for example, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had augmented 24 poor Cheshire livings, 13 of them to the desired minimum of £150 a year.⁸⁸

Graham's death in 1865 gave Palmerston his last opportunity to nominate to the episcopal bench. The new bishop, William Jacobson, although approved by Shaftesbury as a 'proper man', owed his appointment to Gladstone, whose agent he had been in Oxford. He refused to live in the gloomy and dilapidated palace and moved to an 18th-century house by the Dee, which was remodelled at the cost of the diocese. An old-fashioned High Churchman, influenced by but not participating in the Oxford Movement, Jacobson retained the see until 1884, and proved a zealous and tactful diocesan.⁸⁹ His successor, William Stubbs, Regius professor of modern history at Oxford, and a disciple of the Tractarians, was perhaps more interested in the great national issues of the time than the detailed administration of his diocese, and in any case had little chance to leave his mark in Chester since he returned to Oxford in 1889.⁹⁰ He was succeeded by Francis Jayne, vicar of Leeds, who was to hold the see until his retirement in 1919, despite being offered the far more lucrative diocese of Durham, and to prove a good administrator and a firm defender of the Prayer Book.⁹¹

Graham's episcopal style, which restricted his public duties to ordinations, confirmations, and the consecration of new churches, and gave no encouragement to diocesan *esprit de corps*, had come to seem old-fashioned in the 1860s.⁹² Jacobson embarked upon a thorough reorganization of the diocesan administration upon his arrival in 1865. Hitherto the ruri-decanal office had been reduced to a sinecure through the old anomaly whereby the archdeacons lacked jurisdiction *ex officio* and only acquired it by holding the consolidated rural deaneries of their archdeaconries.⁹³ Jacobson, finding a new archdeacon of Chester (collated only two days before Graham's death),⁹⁴ restructured his office, separating it from the constituent rural deaneries. Several new deaneries were created, and fourteen rural deans appointed (a fifteenth was added in 1872).⁹⁵ The new system had to be modified with the creation of the see of Liverpool in 1880; a new archdeaconry was erected at Macclesfield, the deanery of Wirral transferred to the Chester archdeaconry, and a new deanery created at Congleton, to bring the number in the reduced diocese up to ten.⁹⁶ Further deaneries were created later in the century.⁹⁷

Linked with the restoration of the rural deaneries was another important administrative change, the institution of the diocesan conference, a consultative body designed to meet the growing desire for a degree of ecclesiastical autonomy.

⁸⁷ Graham, *Charge*, 1853.

⁸⁸ *Ist Gen. Rep. Eccl. Com.* pp. 22–50.

⁸⁹ Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* i. 472; *D.N.B.*; *J.C.A.S.*

xxxvii. 71.

⁹⁰ *D.N.B.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁹³ See above; Ches. R.O., EDA 2/23, pp. 55, 832; ED 7/1.

⁹⁴ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/14, pp. 677–8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 692–4; EDA 1/15, pp. 3–4, 320. The 15 rural deaneries were Chester, E. and W. Frodsham, N. and S.

Liverpool, N. and S. Macclesfield, Malpas, Middlewich, Nantwich, N. Meols and Ormskirk, Prescott, Wigan, Wirral, and Wirral.

⁹⁶ Bowdon, Chester, Congleton, Frodsham, Macclesfield, Malpas, Middlewich, Nantwich, Stockport, Wirral: *Dioc. Cal.* (1885), 69; cf. Jacobson, *Charge*, 1880.

⁹⁷ They were increased to 12 with the addition of the rural deaneries of Birkenhead and Mottram in 1888. In 1907 Wallasey deanery was created: *Dioc. Cal.* (1889), 68; (1908), 86.

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Chester, which established its diocesan conference in 1870, was one of the first dioceses to do so and to send representatives from it to a central council.⁹⁸ The new body was composed of both lay and clerical elements; it comprised the archdeacons, the rural deans, the chancellor, the dean and one of the canons of Chester, and many representative members, including one-third of the licensed clergy of the diocese and laymen from the rural deaneries.⁹⁹ Ruri-decanal conferences were also established. As early as 1868 Jacobson referred to the clergy's decanal meetings, recommending that laymen be invited to join them, and by 1871 there were conferences in nine of the fifteen deaneries.¹ The diocesan body was enlarged in 1875 with the addition of all the beneficed clergy and all the lay representatives from the ruri-decanal conferences, and in 1878 new rules were drawn up which entrusted administrative duties to a committee of management empowered to nominate, with the bishop's approval, an additional 24 laymen. Every church or congregation sending representatives to the conference was to pay a small contribution towards expenses, such payments being a condition of representation.² The new constitution did not meet with universal approval, and was condemned by Stubbs as too cumbersome, but attempts to introduce a system of elected representatives in the 1880s came to nothing.³

The new coherence of the diocese found expression in such actions as the establishment in 1885 of the *Diocesan Gazette* and in 1886 of the diocesan house of mercy.⁴ Chester cathedral acquired a new diocesan role with the establishment of Sunday services in the nave and a preaching cycle involving clergy from all quarters of the diocese.⁵ Diocesan societies proliferated.⁶ Especially significant was the laity's increasing involvement in diocesan administration. In the 1890s voluntary councils were established in some parishes, consisting of the regular parish officials, reinforced by nominees of the incumbent, and representatives of the vestry, choir, day and Sunday schools, and other local agencies. They had no statutory power, but were used as consultative and administrative bodies.⁷

The laity were particularly active in financial affairs. Diocesan finance was becoming increasingly important, as the abolition of compulsory church rates in 1868 rendered parishes less financially self-sufficient. Voluntary rates continued to be levied in a number of parishes in the 1880s but thereafter rapidly declined.⁸ Offertories, which gradually superseded them, remained unsatisfactory, and more and more activities had to be financed by voluntary diocesan funds, run by committees in which laymen played an increasing part.⁹ In 1873 the Diocesan Finance Association was founded, upon the recommendations of a committee established by the diocesan conference, to take custody of the funds of four important diocesan institutions, the Church Building Society, the Board of Education, the Warrington Institutions,¹⁰ and the recently formed Benefices Augmentation Fund. The board of management of the new association was to consist of the bishop, chancellor, and archdeacons, and representatives of the deaneries, diocesan societies,

⁹⁸ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1871, 16; Ches. R.O., ED 7/1; Chadwick, *Victorian Ch.* ii. 359–60.

⁹⁹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1901), 190.

¹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868, 6–7; *Charge*, 1871, 22.

² *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1901), 190–1.

³ *Ibid.* (1886), ix. 4–5, 14–15; Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁴ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1886), i; (1886), iv. 9–10; Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁵ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868, 46.

⁶ *Dioc. Cal.* (1880–1919); Jacobson, *Charge*, 1874, 22–3.

⁷ F. Jayne, *Charge*, 1896, 31–3; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1898), 132–5; Ches. R.O., ED Acc. 1793, deanery chapter minute bk. (1886–1910), s.a. 1899.

⁸ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1874; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1897), 68–71.

⁹ e.g. Ches. R.O., ED 1/1, pp. 6–12; *Dioc. Cal.* (1888), 127; (1898), 151; Jayne, *Charge*, 1902.

¹⁰ For the relief of widows and orphans and the educ. of daughters of the dioc. clergy, formed 1697; *Dioc. Cal.* (1885), 122–3.

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and life members. By 1878 annual collections, subscriptions, and donations to the association totalled nearly £6,500, almost all of which was distributed amongst the four institutions.¹¹ That high level, however, was not long maintained, and by the mid 1880s the association's total annual income had fallen to about £3,200, causing the committee to begin those appeals for increased support which were to continue until 1912.¹² The growing feeling that the association was insufficiently known and appreciated found expression in 1906 in the appointment of one of the diocesan clergy to publicize its needs and secure further support.¹³ Meanwhile the number of societies whose funds were entrusted to the association gradually expanded; in 1896 the newly-formed Chester Diocesan Spiritual Aid Society was added to the original four societies, and in 1912 the number was further expanded to nine, with the addition of the Ordination Candidates Fund founded in 1911, the Clergy Sustentation Fund, the Clergy Pensions Fund, and the Church Schools Association founded in 1897.¹⁴

In 1912 the continued inadequacy of the response to appeals for funds necessitated a radical revision of the original scheme, in accordance with suggestions from the archbishops' committee on church finance.¹⁵ The funds of the various societies were consolidated into a single church fund and the association was made the diocesan conference's financial executive. An assessment was levied on every rural deanery, based upon the number of communicants in each, and that sum was in turn allotted to the parishes by joint meetings in the deaneries of churchwardens and members of the ruri-decanal conferences. To make the association itself more representative of 'the wider spirit of responsible churchmanship' underlying the reforms, a new class of members was created, elected by the ruri-decanal conferences, and in 1914 it was resolved to set up in each deanery elected committees chaired by the rural dean to advise on the raising and distribution of the diocesan church fund. The reforms achieved some success. Only four parishes stood entirely aloof from the scheme, and only eighteen failed to pay at least three-quarters of the quota allotted to them.¹⁶ Even during the First World War receipts remained fairly stable.¹⁷ The sums involved, of course, formed only a very small proportion of the total expenditure upon church work in the diocese, but great importance was attached to them, for they were thought to encourage lay co-operation in funding the church.¹⁸

The most important aspect of diocesan finance, with which the association became increasingly concerned, was the maintenance of the clergy at a reasonable standard of living. In 1868 Jacobson reported that there were 165 beneficed clergymen in the diocese whose stipends were below the accepted norms, of whom over 100 were substantially underpaid. Many also lacked a glebe house.¹⁹ In 1870 the bishop founded a fund to augment poor benefices, in conjunction with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty, and by 1880 £70,000 had been spent to that end. In 1880 Jacobson was pleased to find that only 66 small benefices under £200 remained in the reduced diocese, and only 48 lacked a house.²⁰ New problems, however, were looming; because of the agricultural depression, clerical incomes fell catastrophically in the 1880s and 90s, and by 1897

¹¹ Ches. R.O., ED 8/1.

¹² Ibid. ED 8/2; ED 8/3.

¹³ Ibid. ED 8/2.

¹⁴ Ibid.; ED 8/3; *Annual Rep. of Chester Dioc. Finance Assoc.* (1913).

¹⁵ See, e.g., *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1912), 97-9.

¹⁶ *Annual Rep. Chester Dioc. Finance Assoc.* (1913), 11-14; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1912), 14-15, 44; (1913), 30-2,

46-8, 76-7.

¹⁷ Ches. R.O., ED 8/3.

¹⁸ In 1914 the total expenditure was £169,000: *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1914), 46-8.

¹⁹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868; cf. *Annual Rep. Chester Dioc. Finance Assoc.* (1873), 15.

²⁰ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1880, 18-20; Ches. R.O., ED 1/1.

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the tithe rent-charge had been reduced by 30 per cent.²¹ In 1892 the average value of the diocese's livings was put at little over £200 a year, and in 1899 the chancellor estimated that nearly one-third were actually below that figure.²² More and more was demanded from the laity. By the end of the century there had been a large increase in Easter offerings,²³ and new agencies had come into being to support the clergy in their difficulties. In 1887 a diocesan clergy pensions fund was established to raise capital and additional annual subsidies, to ease the retirement of old and disabled incumbents, who had served at least 10 years in the diocese.²⁴ By 1897 seven clergymen were in receipt of pensions, and by 1902 the fund's annual income had risen by almost 50 per cent.²⁵ In 1897 a new fund was founded to assist the clergy of parishes too poor themselves to provide support, to give aid in cases of sickness and special emergency, and to give honoraria to especially long-serving clergy. By 1902 it had about £500 a year to distribute.²⁶ The condition of the clergy, however, remained embarrassed, even when the income from the commuted tithes started to rise again in the new century, and it was accepted that it had become permanently necessary to raise funds for their support in the parishes.²⁷

The growing poverty of the clergy rendered the duty of supporting their assistant clergy increasingly onerous, and efforts were made to persuade the laity to shoulder the burden.²⁸ Increasing emphasis was also placed upon lay ministerial assistance, which had been initiated by Bishop Jacobson in the 1870s,²⁹ and in 1885 a Diocesan Lay Workers Association was formed, 75 members being enrolled.³⁰ The numbers of licensed lay readers fluctuated at first; there were 28 by 1880 and only 19 in 1885.³¹ Under Bishop Jayne, however, numbers rose rapidly; in the first 18 months of his episcopate 39 new licenses were granted,³² and by 1900 there were 86 readers in the diocese, despite the fact that the bishop was still deploring the insufficiency of whole-hearted lay workers. By 1907 they had further increased to 105.³³ Even so, salaried curates remained indispensable. Although national agencies such as the Additional Curates' Society and the Church Pastoral Aid Society supported perhaps 40 curates in the diocese in the 1890s, their contributions alone could never be sufficient.³⁴ In 1895 a committee set up by conference to inquire into the spiritual needs of the diocese reported that of 61 parishes circularized, 47 had asked for an additional 34 clerical and 17 lay workers.³⁵ As a result the clerical and lay agency of the Diocesan Church Building Society was formed into a separate Spiritual Aid Society in 1896, to provide grants towards the stipends of assistant staff,³⁶ and by 1913 received the largest grant of any of the diocesan societies.³⁷ Its work was supplemented by local Church Aid Societies, founded in the 1890s in Birkenhead and in Stockport and Mottram deaneries.³⁸

Their financial difficulties had a deleterious effect upon the clergy, already deprived of some of their richest plums by the Act of 1840, and suffering increased competition from rival professions. The proportion of well educated men taking holy orders started to decline in the later 19th century, and a sharp rise in the

²¹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1897), 101; Jayne, *Charge*, 1896.

²² *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1892), 196; (1899), 111.

²³ Jayne, *Charge*, 1896; *Charge*, 1902.

²⁴ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1887), 13-15.

²⁵ *Dioc. Cal.* (1897), 148; Jayne, *Charge*, 1902.

²⁶ *Dioc. Cal.* (1898), 151; Jayne, *Charge*, 1902.

²⁷ Ches. R.O., ED 8/3, p. 139.

²⁸ e.g. Jayne, *Charge*, 1896.

²⁹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1877, 48.

³⁰ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1; *Dioc. Cal.* (1887), 123.

³¹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1880, 46-7; *Dioc. Cal.* (1885), 117.

³² Jayne, *Charge*, 1890, App.

³³ *Dioc. Cal.* (1900), 114-16; (1907), 123-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.* (1897), 158; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1896), 89-90; (1898), 70-1.

³⁵ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1895), 200-1.

³⁶ Ches. R.O., ED 11/1.

³⁷ *Ibid.* ED 8/2.

³⁸ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1896), 89-90, 132-4; Jayne, *Charge*, 1902.

number of non-graduates may be detected among those ordained by Bishop Jacobson in the 1870s.³⁹ By 1884 the diocese contained 41 incumbents and 50 curates without a degree.⁴⁰ As the decline in the incomes of the country clergy in the 1880s and 1890s took effect there was a further deterioration in the social standing and education of the clergy, and in his address to the conference of 1900 Bishop Jayne urged the necessity of raising standards of entry to holy orders.⁴¹ Numbers too declined, and by 1911 the need was such that a fund was established to assist diocesan ordinands through university or theological college.⁴² Although never large, the number assisted rose steadily, reaching thirteen in 1913, until the Great War sharply reduced the number of ordinands.⁴³ The number of clergy in the diocese, however, continued to fall; by 1920 it had dropped from the post-1880 peak of 440 to only 365.⁴⁴

Church building continued almost unabated; the first fifteen years of Jacobson's episcopate saw the construction of over 70 new churches, and the years 1880–1900 a further 45 in Cheshire alone, which by then constituted the whole of the diocese. Only after 1900 did the pace greatly slacken, with the building of a mere 12 churches between 1900 and 1910.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there are signs that well before that date church building had ceased to be of quite the overriding concern that it had been earlier in the century. By 1868 the Diocesan Church Building Society, never especially popular, was almost bankrupt, and by 1873 it received offertories from only 55 churches in the diocese. The enlarging of the scope of its activities in that year to include aid for the pastorate is an indication of the direction in which opinion was moving;⁴⁶ by the end of the century there was a growing feeling that churches were no longer so desperately needed, and that the requirements of the clergy ought to have priority.⁴⁷

Only in certain black spots which had lagged behind the rest of the diocese did church-building retain its urgency. In 1885 Bishop Stubbs appealed on behalf of the great industrial population of Stockport rural deanery, and in 1886 he launched a special ten-year fund to aid church extension there, amended in 1888 to include the new deanery of Mottram.⁴⁸ Stockport and Mottram were still the worst provided areas in the diocese, with only one clergyman to every 3,200 people,⁴⁹ but despite the generosity of the bishop, who started the fund with a gift of £1,000, and the duke of Westminster, who donated £1,000 a year, the initial response was not encouraging. By 1891, however, enough money had been raised from subscriptions and from the assisted parishes to provide three new churches, eight chapels of ease and mission churches, and one parsonage house, and to pay the stipends of five extra curates; two new parishes and two further churches were planned.⁵⁰ At the expiry of the ten-year period in 1896 the fund was succeeded by the Stockport and Mottram Church Aid Society,⁵¹ and in the following year a new appeal was launched for additional churches in Wallasey, felt to be in immediate need of at least four new churches, with the result that by 1899 one new church had been opened, another constructed at New Brighton, and a new site purchased at Liscard.⁵²

³⁹ e.g. EDA 1/14, pp. 57–9, 75–6, 545–6; EDA 1/15, pp. 48–9, 355–6, 371–2; Jacobson, *Charge*, 1877; *Charge*, 1880.

⁴⁰ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁴¹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1900), 183–7.

⁴² Ches. R.O., ED 10/1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*; *Annual Rep. Chester Dioc. Finance Assoc.* (1915), 17, 95; (1916), 18, 80.

⁴⁴ *Dioc. Cal.* (1900), 104–10; (1920), 36.

⁴⁵ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868; *Charge*, 1871; *Charge*, 1874;

Charge, 1877; *Charge*, 1880; *Dioc. Cal.* (1880–1910).

⁴⁶ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868; *Charge* 1874; *Charge*, 1880.

⁴⁷ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1896), 132–4; (1900), 185.

⁴⁸ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁴⁹ As against Wirral, 1:1,740; Chester, 1:1,000; Malpas, 1:720; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1886), i. 13–14. Cf. *ibid.* (1888), 8; (1891), 67; Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁵⁰ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1891), 67; (1892), 96–7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* (1896), 89–90.

⁵² *Ibid.* (1898), 48–50; (1900), 208–9.

The number of benefices increased steadily, rising from 370 in 1867 to 426 just before the creation of the new diocese of Liverpool in 1880;⁵³ it then fell to 253, but had risen again to 284 in 1920.⁵⁴ The commissioners continued to make grants to Cheshire parishes both to meet benefactions and to augment needy or populous livings, but the establishment of the Liverpool diocese relieved Chester of its worst remaining problems and thereafter its receipts from government sources dwindled.⁵⁵ Endowment continued to pose difficulties, especially with the rising antipathy to pew rents. The Open Church Association made an increasing impression on the diocese from the 1860s,⁵⁶ especially after the opening of the nave of Chester cathedral for free evening services, and by the 1890s more than half the diocese's church accommodation was free.⁵⁷ All the 3,700 sittings provided by the Stockport and Mottram fund up to 1892 were free.⁵⁸ Despite their obvious virtues, the free churches found their offertories an inadequate substitute for pew rents, and were often financially embarrassed even where their parishioners could well afford to support them.⁵⁹ For churches dependent on private benefaction pew rents might still prove essential. In the church of St. George's, Stockport, founded by George Fearn in 1896, over one-third of the sittings were appropriated. The founder had intended a well endowed free church, but expenses had been greater than expected. The building cost £50,000 and pew rents were deemed necessary to supplement the incumbent's income, to provide the stipends of two assistant clergy, and to meet additional expenses.⁶⁰

The new churches of the late 19th century reflect the growing influence of the High Church and include buildings of the very highest quality, such as Bodley's Eccleston (1899) and Pearson's Norley (1878–9) and Thurstaston (1885). Other London architects who worked in the diocese at that time include Butterfield, Brooks, Street, and Blomfield. The bulk of the work, however, was done by local architects, the best of whom were John Douglas, who was patronized by the 1st duke of Westminster and built a number of attractive churches in and around Chester, and the Lancashire firm of Paley and Austin (later Austin and Paley), which was responsible for especially notable churches in Crewe and Stockport.⁶¹ Many of those architects were also much engaged in church restoration, which became increasingly important as the need for extra accommodation waned. The cathedral set the tone with a restoration by Hussey in the 1840s and 1850s, and even more extensive work by Scott from 1868 and Blomfield from 1882.⁶² Other important restorations included Paley and Austin's at St. Helen's, Northwich, between 1883 and 1886, J. P. Seddon's at St. Mary's, Chester, between 1890 and 1891, and Medland Taylor's at St. Thomas's, Stockport, in 1890.⁶³ Between 1873 and 1892 over 90 churches underwent major restorations in Cheshire, and more was spent on restoration than on church building itself.⁶⁴ Churches acquired new reredoses, stone altars, altar steps and rails, stained-glass windows, and brass crosses and candlesticks, in accordance with the norms laid down by the Ecclesiological Society earlier in the century. Galleries and high pews were removed and replaced by seats or

⁵³ *Dioc. Cal.* (1867), 177–91; (1880), 65. 37 new dists. were created in Ches. alone, 1868–80: Jacobson, *Charge*, 1871; *Charge*, 1874; *Charge*, 1877; *Charge*, 1880.

⁵⁴ *Dioc. Cal.* (1881), 71; (1920), 42–67.

⁵⁵ 22nd Rep. Ecclesiastical Commissioners for Eng. [C. 52], pp. 31–61, H.C. (1870), xxi; 36th Rep. [C. 3922], pp. 19–49, H.C. (1884), xxii; 52nd Rep. [Cd. 81], pp. 23–53, H.C. (1900), xviii.

⁵⁶ *Annual Rep. Chester Dioc. Open Ch. Assoc.* (1867).

⁵⁷ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1895), 81–2; (1897), 68–71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (1892), 96–7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* (1897), 68–71.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* (1897), 68–71; P. Howell, *Victorian Ch.* 49.

⁶¹ Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 33–6.

⁶² G. W. O. Addleshaw, *Pictorial Hist. of Chester Cath.* 14–20.

⁶³ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1886), i. 11; (1891), 3, 91–3; Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 341.

⁶⁴ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1892), 55.

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benches, choirs were restored to the chancel in newly-furnished stalls, and in some places screens were introduced.⁶⁵ Such changes did not meet with universal approval. By the 1890s fears were being expressed about the accuracy of the restorations,⁶⁶ and in 1908 Bishop Jayne publicly criticized expenditure on adornments such as stained-glass windows, feeling that the money would be better spent on improving the clergy's standard of living.⁶⁷

The newly built or refurbished churches formed the setting for new kinds of public worship. The norms established by the Tractarians were by the 1870s starting to take root in the diocese, encouraged by Bishop Jacobson, who was sympathetic to, if not a disciple of, the Oxford Movement.⁶⁸ By 1868 most parishes had at least some weekday services during the year, and in his primary charge Jacobson strenuously recommended the restoration of the principal holy days commemorated in the Prayer Book.⁶⁹ By 1871 he could report that divine services on holy days, especially Ascension Day, had multiplied satisfactorily.⁷⁰ Much, however, remained amiss; by 1874 there were still churches with weekday services only on Good Friday and Christmas Day, and daily services were still a rarity;⁷¹ the general acceptance of the abridged services permitted in 1872 also displeased the bishop. Nevertheless, the repeated injunctions gradually took effect, and by 1877 over 230 churches observed Ascension Day, and nearly 100 celebrated considerably more.⁷²

Jacobson was especially anxious to encourage more frequent celebrations of the eucharist, regarding once a month as the minimum and recommending weekly celebrations as 'the primitive usage.'⁷³ At his primary visitation he discovered that 38 churches in his diocese celebrated 8 or fewer times a year, 51 fortnightly, 10 weekly, and only 2 more frequently than that. The great majority (almost 200) celebrated about once a month. With his encouragement the figures steadily improved throughout the 1870s, and in 1880, in the newly reduced diocese, 45 churches celebrated every week, 63 every fortnight, and 123 every month. By then only 6 churches remained with a meagre observance of eight or fewer eucharists a year, and they were roundly condemned by the bishop.⁷⁴ Jacobson also criticized as unnecessary the Evangelical practice of evening communions.⁷⁵

More difficult to secure than frequent eucharists was an increase in communicants. Throughout his episcopate Jacobson continued to deplore the small numbers taking the sacraments, despite the large and growing number of those confirmed.⁷⁶ Anxiety on the subject remained, and in the 1890s the conference established committees to inquire into church attendance, which recommended more frequent communions and fresh attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the service, such as the feeling which persisted in country areas in particular that communicants set themselves up as better than their neighbours. In the towns, where Sunday labour especially interfered with church attendance, earlier communions were felt to be desirable, and churchmen were urged to set up communicant guilds and institute early weekday celebrations.⁷⁷ Anxiety about church attendance and Sunday observance nevertheless continued.⁷⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid. (1888), 6; (1889), 69; (1892), 50, 69; (1893), 41, 59; (1894), 22-3; (1894), 133, 167; (1898), 13-14.

⁶⁶ e.g. *ibid.* (1897), 161.

⁶⁷ Jayne, *Charge*, 1908.

⁶⁸ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1; D.N.B.

⁶⁹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 1871.

⁷¹ Ibid. 1874.

⁷² Ibid. 1877.

⁷³ Ibid. 1868; 1877.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 1880.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 1874.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 1868; 1871; 1874; 1877; 1880.

⁷⁷ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1892), 196-7; (1894), 190-1.

⁷⁸ e.g. in Frodsham deanery: Ches. R.O., ED Acc. 1793, chapter minute bk. (1886-1910), s.a. 1902.

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Attempts were also made to reform the administration of baptism, still privately conducted in contravention of the rubrics in many churches. The number of baptisms administered was actually diminishing in many churches in the diocese, and Jacobson believed that it was essential to make the sacrament more accessible, and to help the poor in their difficulty of finding suitable sponsors. By 1877 some success had been achieved in securing observance of the rubrics, and 240 churches administered baptism at divine service. The numbers seeking the sacrament, however, continued to fall, largely because of the difficulty over sponsors.⁷⁹

Reform was also attempted in other fields. When St. Aidan's Theological College closed in somewhat scandalous circumstances in 1868, the bishop resolved to reopen it on a new basis, in closer association with the diocese. A new governing body was established, including the dean and archdeacon of Chester, the archdeacon of Liverpool, and the chancellor, and a new principal, William Saumarez Smith, was appointed. By 1880, when the college was placed under the joint control of the dioceses of Liverpool and Chester, it was solvent and contained over 80 students. In 1890, however, with the appointment of a new principal, E. E. Harding, the college ceased to be Evangelical and numbers declined, until Harding moved to Lichfield in 1900. Under his successors it returned to its former churchmanship, numbers rose again, and its position was stabilized.⁸⁰ The growing interest in training the clergy was accompanied by an attempt to extend their mode of operation. In 1890 Bishop Jayne launched an appeal for funds to support a team of ministers to travel round the diocese preaching and distributing 'pure literature', and to assist in the parishes during vacancies and at other times of need. The laity responded well and by 1892 there were four 'special service clergy' whose assistance was much in demand throughout the diocese.⁸¹

In 1884 Lord Egerton of Tatton in a speech at the diocesan conference could commend Tractarianism as having 'begun thoroughly to leaven the church and to produce a heartiness and frequency of services which the Evangelical movement had failed generally to inculcate.'⁸² Typical of the changes were those introduced at Great Budworth by Canon Moberley (1880-92), which included weekly communions, daily services, the commemoration of Advent, Lent, Holy Week, and the greater festivals, and a choir clothed in cassocks and surplices.⁸³ By the 1890s High Church doctrines had gained a foothold in several important areas of diocesan life. The warden of the special service clergy, Dr. Cogswell, in an address to the *Societas Clericorum* of the Wirral deanery in 1891, quoted *Lux Mundi* with approval and referred sympathetically to Newman, Liddon, and Church, and to 'the sound doctrine and historic continuity to be found in the Church of England.'⁸⁴ St. Aidan's College swung briefly to the High Church party under Harding, who in 1892 recommended *Lux Mundi* and writings by Newman, Gore, Church, Gladstone, and Haddan as suitable reading material for chapter meetings.⁸⁵ A new dignity was imparted to diocesan ceremonial. In the 1890s the bishop appeared at ordinations in Stockport and Macclesfield wearing cope and mitre, and inaugurated the diocesan conference, similarly vested, with a solemn choral eucharist.⁸⁶ The cathedral became a centre of relatively advanced churchmanship with altar-lights, frequent eucharists, and solemn requiems for departed members of the chapter.⁸⁷

⁷⁹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868; 1877.

⁸⁰ F. B. Heiser, *St. Aidan's Coll., Birkenhead, 1847-1947*, 12-63.

⁸¹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1891), 52; (1892), 3.

⁸² Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁸³ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1892), 84-5; cf. Holy Trinity, Chester: *ibid.* (1899), 64.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* (1891), 48-52.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* (1892), 70-1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* (1891), 3-4, 170; (1892), 119-20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* (1898), 134; (1916), 61-2; *Dioc. Cal.* (1895), 73.

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The more extreme manifestations of the Anglo-Catholic movement appeared only tardily. By the 1870s ritualistic churches were being built in Liverpool, and Jacobson was twice mobbed by 'Orangemen' on his way to consecrate them.⁸⁸ In Cheshire the most important Anglo-Catholic centre was the Stockport area. By the 1880s Stockport St. Peter's had acquired the full appurtenances of ritualist worship, and St. Thomas's had connexions with Pusey House, and employed such high sacramental prayers as the *agnus dei* and *ave verum* in its services. By the 1890s the stations of the cross were commemorated at both churches on Good Friday, and St. Peter's had become an outpost of the English Church Union, in association with the nearby churches of St. Thomas, Cheadle, and St. Martin, Marple.⁸⁹ The correspondence columns of the diocesan magazine reveal that by the 1880s the ritualists had acquired a number of vocal sympathizers who condemned the imprisonment of Bell Cox of Liverpool, and warmly defended the use of the eucharistic vestments and the biretta.⁹⁰

It is difficult to assess the strength of the more advanced ritualists in the diocese, but they were probably numerically weak. As late as 1915 Bishop Jayne affirmed that he knew of only three churches where the *English Hymnal* had been used, and in one of those it had been withdrawn some time before.⁹¹ The bishops, however, were hostile only to the more extreme manifestations of the movement, and were emphatically opposed to prosecutions. Although in his primary charge Jacobson condemned 'un-English, even anti-English' practices, irreconcilable with Anglican tradition, he consecrated ritualistic churches and incurred odium among Low Churchmen by also condemning Protestant 'derogations of duty', including slipshod administration of holy communion and neglect of holy days.⁹² His successor, Stubbs, was sympathetic to the Tractarians and in his public utterances was more severe upon what he termed the 'lazy' Evangelical practice of evening communion, than upon ritualistic excesses.⁹³ Jayne, a firm defender of the Prayer Book, was perhaps the most rigorous, especially towards the end of his episcopate. Nevertheless, even he at first was conciliatory, and participated in ornate ceremonies, vested in a cope and mitre.⁹⁴ Moreover, in a pastoral letter of 1891, and in later pronouncements, he made it clear that he was opposed to prosecution and regarded the bishop's role as of supreme importance.⁹⁵ Gradually, however, his approach hardened. In 1899 he preached a sermon supporting the archbishop's condemnation of incense and expressing the hope that all his clergy would conform to the ruling.⁹⁶ In 1915, in a note on ecclesiastical discipline addressed to his archdeacons and rural deans and published in the *Diocesan Gazette*, he was sterner still, and strongly condemned the 'seductive' and 'unwholesome' teaching of the *English Hymnal*, the use of wafers, the imitation of the Roman method of administering the elements, and all attempts by the incumbent alone to introduce the eucharistic vestments. Those injunctions were to be brought to the notice of clergy and laity as opportunities arose, especially at visitations.⁹⁷

The growth of state-sponsored non-denominational education was accepted only reluctantly in Cheshire, which was regarded as a stronghold of the church schools.⁹⁸ As a result, greater emphasis was placed upon Sunday schools, whose declining

⁸⁸ D.N.B.

⁸⁹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1888), 100; (1891), 3-4; (1893), 95; (1895), 89.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* (1887), 11-12; (1891), 149-51; (1892), 156; (1894), 116; (1899), 14, 26, 48-50, 66, 82.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* (1915), 92-3.

⁹² Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868; D.N.B.

⁹³ Stubbs, *Charge*, 1886.

⁹⁴ e.g. *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1892), 119-20.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* (1891), 21-4; (1898), 185-206; (1915), 90-5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* (1899), 146-9.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* (1915), 90-5.

⁹⁸ Below, Education.

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attendances were greatly lamented.⁹⁹ A diocesan Sunday School Association was formed in the 1880s to secure uniform syllabuses and recommend suitable teaching manuals,¹ and the clergy were encouraged to visit schools regularly and instruct pupil teachers.² The work of the diocesan Board of Education steadily expanded from the 1870s, its main duties being as before the inspection of religious instruction, the maintenance of training colleges (in conjunction with the sees of Manchester and Liverpool), and the provision of grants to schools in poor localities.³ Its work was especially important as school boards were slow to be established in Cheshire.⁴ In 1897 a diocesan Church Schools' Association was formed to raise and distribute funds for the benefit of church and voluntary schools in accordance with the Act of that year.⁵ Church schools were finding themselves in increasing financial difficulties and conference greeted with relief the 1902 Act which provided support in return for local authority representation among the managers.⁶ In 1909 there were over 300 schools supported by donations and government grant; only 7 schools had been closed or lost to the local education authority since the 1902 Act.⁷

The disestablishment of the Welsh church raised especially warm feelings in the diocese. Bishop Jayne, as a former principal of St. David's College, Lampeter, had strong connexions with Wales and took a leading part in resisting the change. Mass protests were organized against the Liberal proposals of 1893-5, and there was even more vehement opposition in 1913 in which Jayne was especially prominent.⁸

1919-79

Bishop Jayne was succeeded by H. L. Paget, suffragan bishop of Stepney, then aged 66. Paget, a High Churchman whose first curacy had been under Benjamin Webb at St. Andrew's, Wells Street, held the see until his retirement in 1932, when he was succeeded by Geoffrey Fisher, headmaster of Repton (Derb.).⁹ Fisher, an energetic bishop, zealous visitor, and able administrator, destined eventually for Canterbury, remained at Chester only until 1939 when he was translated to London.¹⁰ He was replaced by Douglas Crick, suffragan bishop of Stafford, who resigned in 1955.¹¹ Crick's successor, Gerald Ellison, suffragan bishop of Willesden,¹² was translated to London in 1973, when he was succeeded by H. V. Whitsey, suffragan bishop of Hertford.¹³

Increasingly the bishop needed assistance in his episcopal duties. Jayne had relied upon an assistant bishop in his last years,¹⁴ and in 1934 the office was revived by Fisher, who in his first year in office found the burden of his episcopal responsibilities, in particular confirmations, too severe.¹⁵ His nominee, Norman Tubbs, former bishop of Rangoon, remained assistant bishop until 1949, and for much of the time was also a member of the cathedral chapter.¹⁶ In 1950 the see acquired its first suffragan bishop, F. J. Okell, who took the title of bishop of Stockport,¹⁷ and in

⁹⁹ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1871; 1874; 1877; 1880.

¹ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1; *Dioc. Cal.* (1887), 123.

² Stubbs, *Charge*, 1886.

³ Jacobson, *Charge*, 1868; 1871; 1874; 1877; 1880; Ches. R.O., ED 2/1a, b; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1897), 37-8.

⁴ Ches. R.O., ED 7/1.

⁵ *Ibid.* ED 4/1; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1897), 180.

⁶ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1902), 144-58.

⁷ Ches. R.O., ED 4/1.

⁸ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1893), 53-8, 70-1; (1913), 126-31.

⁹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1919), 93; (1928), 101-3; (1929),

22-3, 34-5; (1932), 113-15, 162-3; E. K. Paget, *Henry Luke Paget*.

¹⁰ *Ches. Observer*, 28 May, 1 Oct. 1932.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 1939, undated press cutting in Chester City R.O.; *Chester Chron.* 10 Aug. 1973.

¹² *Dioc. Cal.* (1955), 5.

¹³ *Chester Chron.* 2 Nov. 1973.

¹⁴ *Dioc. Cal.* (1916-19); *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1916), 121, 141.

¹⁵ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1933), 129; (1934), 77.

¹⁶ *Dioc. Cal.* (1936-49).

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (1950), 5.

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1963 a further assistant bishop was appointed.¹⁸ A second suffragan with the title of bishop of Birkenhead was appointed in 1965, and the diocese was organized into two episcopal districts roughly corresponding to the two archdeaconries. The two suffragans were given general oversight of their respective districts, and were to deal with administrative, pastoral, and personal problems, while the archdeacons continued to supervise parsonage houses, faculties, and the care of churches.¹⁹

Diocesan boundaries remained unchanged to 1979, except for the transfer of Northenden, Northen Etchells, and part of Baguley to the diocese of Manchester in 1933.²⁰ Administratively much more significant were the changes issuing from the creation in 1919 of the National Assembly of the Church of England. In 1921 a committee appointed by the bishop to examine the proposed system found that it would be relatively easy to put into effect; ruridecanal conferences and, in many places, parochial church councils, already existed, and it was necessary only to adapt their duties and membership to the terms of the new measure. The ruridecanal conferences, which were to meet at least twice a year, were to enjoy an enhanced financial role; the parochial church councils, which were to meet at least quarterly, were to elect representatives to the ruridecanal conferences and to take over some of the powers formerly vested solely in the churchwardens.²¹ Lastly, in 1924 the powers and constitution of the diocesan conference were defined afresh. Henceforth it was reorganized into a tripartite grouping consisting of the bishop, the chamber of clergy, composed of all beneficed and licensed clergy, and the chamber of laity, composed of *ex officio*, nominated, and elected members. The new body was not allowed to pronounce on doctrine, but was to deliberate on church matters and make such provisions as according to the bishop were within its competency. For full assent to be given to any proposal the agreement of all three authorities had to be secured. Meetings were held at least once a year under the presidency of the bishop, and numbers tended to be large; in 1926, for example, over 500 members attended.²²

The creation of an official administrative machinery in the early 1920s was accompanied by the reorganization of the many boards, committees, and societies then working in the diocese. The intention was to group church work into big departments, such as finance, missions, education, and social service, which could then be supervised by central boards responsible to the diocesan conference and by local committees in the rural deaneries.²³ In accordance with the recommendations the diocesan Finance Association was in 1927 reconstituted as the diocesan Board of Finance. The new body was to consist of 200 members, of whom 5 were to be *ex officio*, 40 life, and 155 elected to the ruridecanal and diocesan conferences; business was to be conducted by a committee consisting of 66 members, drawn from all three groups.²⁴ Other departments were also reorganized. In 1919 the diocesan conference approved a proposal to amalgamate the Board of Education with the Church Schools Association, and to form a joint body under one management with two secretaries.²⁵ In 1928 the diocesan Board of Missions, founded in 1906, was reconstituted as the diocesan Missionary Council, its elected members becoming representatives of the rural deaneries,²⁶ and the diocesan Sunday Schools Association

¹⁸ Ibid. (1963), 10.

¹⁹ Ibid. (1966), 10–11.

²⁰ Dioc. Conf. Rep. (1933), 8.

²¹ Chester Dioc. Gaz. (1919), 154–5; (1920), 56–8, 78–80; (1922), 88.

²² Dioc. Cal. (1926), 154–6; Chester Dioc. Gaz. (1926), 191–2.

²³ Chester Dioc. Gaz. (1921), 23–4, 146–8.

²⁴ Ches. R.O., ED 8/4, pp. 50–81.

²⁵ Ibid. ED 2/4; ED 4/4; Chester Dioc. Gaz. (1920), 65, 153.

²⁶ Ches. R.O. ED Acc. 1659, minute bk. 1907–18; 1919–33; Dioc. Bd. of Finance Rep. (1927), 103; (1928), 105.

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was also re-formed as the Sunday School Board.²⁷ In 1924, following the Ecclesiastical Dilapidations Measure of the preceding year, a diocesan Dilapidations Board was established to relieve incumbents of the burden of maintaining parsonages and other ecclesiastical property. An advisory committee to assist in the care of church furnishings and fabric was also set up.²⁸

Further reorganization took place in the 1930s under Bishop Fisher. At the Diocesan Conference in 1934 the bishop expressed his determination to rid the diocese of 'obsolete machinery' and to refrain from creating 'unnecessary new machinery'. By then the diocesan organisations had been 'renovated from top to bottom'; reports and accounts had been combined in a single handbook, the Evangelistic Board, the moribund outcome of the National Mission of 1916, had been abolished, the list of lay readers revised, and various bodies such as the Church Building Society and the Church Schools Association reconstituted.²⁹ In 1935-6 the rural deaneries were also reorganized. The old deanery of Wirral was divided into two and the new deaneries of Knutsford and Great Budworth created.³⁰

Post-war reorganization also began the amalgamation of benefices. The Union of Benefices Committee was already in operation by 1925 when five mergers were proposed. Although by 1930 four had been accomplished, thereafter little was done despite the election of a panel to serve on committees of inquiry appointed under the amended Union of Benefices Measure.³¹ It was not until the establishment of the Pastoral Reorganization Committee after the Second World War that further action was taken in the matter.³²

The diocese became an increasingly important administrative and pastoral unit in the 1920s and 1930s. Bishop Paget summoned his clergy to meet in synod to confer on missionary activity in 1926 and to vote on the Revised Prayer Book in 1927.³³ F. S. M. Bennett, dean of Chester, 1920-37, sought with increasing success to secure the cathedral's position as mother church of the diocese. He allotted chapels to various aspects of diocesan life, and introduced a cycle of prayers for each parish in the diocese at the cathedral's weekday eucharists. Above all, he sought to make the restored buildings of the monastic precinct a focus of diocesan life. Bishop Paget, who in 1919 had abandoned 'Deeside', his predecessors' big house by the river, soon afterwards moved into the former deanery in the cathedral close. In 1920 the former canons' residence was transformed into the bishop's hostel, to serve as a retreat house for the diocesan clergy and others, and in 1924 the diocesan offices were moved into Abbey Square. From 1922 both the Chester ruridecanal conference and the diocesan conference itself were held in the cathedral buildings; the cathedral refectory, restored under Bennett, served as the meeting place for all diocesan conferences until 1939, and for most thereafter, and the cathedral welcomed the delegates, providing special services, food, and accommodation.³⁴ In 1936 there was a slight set-back with the discontinuance of the *Diocesan Gazette*, because of its limited circulation and high expense, but a diocesan leaflet with a much wider distribution, containing communications from the bishop and dean and news of diocesan events, partly remedied the deficiency.³⁵

²⁷ *Dioc. Cal.* (1928).

²⁸ *Ibid.* (1943), 152-3; *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1921), 70; (1924), 59, 92-3, 96; (1925), 8, 152.

²⁹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1933), 157; (1934), 147; *Dioc. Cal.* (1943), 150-2; Ches. R.O., ED 4/5.

³⁰ There were thus 16 deaneries: *Dioc. Conf. Rep.* (May 1936), 8-9.

³¹ Ches. R.O., ED 12; *Dioc. Conf. Rep.* (June 1937), 7.

³² *Dioc. Secretary's office, minute bk. of various ctees.* (1939-59). ³³ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1927), 92.

³⁴ *Ibid.* (1919), 116; (1921), 50, 66, 92-3; (1922), 158, 177-80; (1924), 229, 253; (1925), 109-10, 173-4; (1926), 20, 148; J.C.A.S. xxxvii. 71; *Dioc. Conf. Rep.* (1933-66); Paget, H. L. *Paget*, 226-39.

³⁵ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1936), 33-4, 85; Ches. R.O., ED 14.

invalid clergy. In 1853 the missions at Congleton, Crewe, Bollington, Altrincham, and Hyde were all supported by grants from the diocesan fund,²⁸ and in 1879 £175 was spent by the bishop on the support of local missions.²⁹

Despite the financial difficulties of the new diocese the first 25 years of its history saw very rapid expansion and considerable church building. In 1876 Bishop Brown reported that the number of all churches, chapels and stations in the whole diocese had increased from 31 to 84 since his consecration. Most of the expansion had come in Cheshire. In 1851 there had been 18 established missions in the county, and by 1876 there were 33, and at least another ten mass stations, compared with only 11 missions in Shropshire. Expansion in that period largely took place in two areas of the county; on Merseyside where five new churches had been opened, and in central Cheshire where the labours of John Alcock, the priest at Crewe, bore fruit at Middlewich, Northwich, Sandbach, and Wilmslow. This energetic priest was also responsible for the establishment of a mission station at Whitchurch (Salop.) in 1853.³⁰ The growth in the number of missions and of the Catholic population of Cheshire meant that more and more priests were required, and their provision was one of Bishop Brown's major achievements. During his 30-year episcopate he ordained as many as 235 seculars to the priesthood,³¹ and although some of these were ordained on the strength of letters dimissory from other bishops,³² and many others also found employment outside the diocese, it is clear that there was a sharp rise in the numbers of priests active within it. The bishop himself thought that there were three times as many in 1876 as there had been in 1851.³³ The large sums laid out in fees for students at seminaries both at home and abroad during his episcopate,³⁴ and the close interest that he retained in individual students,³⁵ show that the increase was a direct result of Bishop Brown's own efforts. His plan, however, to open a seminary near Shrewsbury, which was mooted as early as 1855, came to nothing.³⁶

Catholicism continued to expand in Cheshire under Bishop Knight, Brown's successor. On his retirement in 1895 there were some 40 churches and mission stations in the county, and a further eight convents, five of which were on industrial Merseyside,³⁷ and at the turn of the century there were thought to be over 45,000 Catholics in Cheshire.³⁸ His episcopate saw further developments in diocesan organization. Apparently it was he who first regularly appointed an episcopal secretary,³⁹ for example, and at the end of his episcopate the Welsh counties of the diocese were separated to form part of the new Welsh Vicariate. Although the change created new financial problems and removed from the diocese the large congregation at Wrexham which the bishop had hoped to retain by making the Great Western line between Shrewsbury and Chester the dividing line between the dioceses, it left that of Shrewsbury a more manageable size.⁴⁰ During Bishop Knight's episcopate also a number of important diocesan charities and institutions were established. The largest was the Bishop Brown Memorial Industrial School at

²⁸ S.E.A., Libr., Acct. Bk. 1851-1872, pp. 5-8, 34-5.

²⁹ Ibid. Acct. Bk. 1871-1904, p. 44.

³⁰ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 11; *Cath. Dir.* (1851), 60-1; (1870), 200-3; (1880), 215-17; P.R.O., HO 129/453-9.

³¹ S.E.A., Libr., 'Liber Ordinum', 1.

³² Cf. *ibid.* sub 4 June 1928; letter of Byrne to Bp. Singleton, Jan. 1911.

³³ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 11.

³⁴ He had 18 students in 1854: S.E.A., Libr., Acct. Bk. 1851-72, pp. 13-14, 38-9, 48-9, 89-90, 97-102; correspondence concerning Ushaw Coll., 1868; Educ. papers of

Ushaw, Oscott., Douai, and Valladolid.

³⁵ S.E.A., Libr., papers concerning Shrews. student at Oscott.

³⁶ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 11, 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.* *passim*; *Cath. Dir.* (1880), 215-17; (1890), 240-2.

³⁸ *Cath. Annual and Almanac for Dioc. of Liverpool and Shrews.* (1898), 110-25; (1906), 87-93.

³⁹ S.E.A., Libr., secretarial notebook, 1883-1940.

⁴⁰ S.E.A., Libr., letters and papers on new Welsh Vicariate, 1893-5.

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Stockport, founded in 1885, which had an annual income of over £2,000. Others were the Shrewsbury Children's Protection and Rescue Society, and the St. Margaret's Refuge Home for Poor Women, both established in Birkenhead in 1888–9. A plan to found a boys' orphanage dedicated to St. Edmund at Bebington as a memorial to Bishop Knight which was first mooted in 1895 did not bear fruit until 1914, and then only after Bishop Allen had assigned the Lenten alms to the project for a number of years.⁴¹

Rural deans had been appointed and rural deaneries created under Bishop Brown; there were three in 1860 and five in 1870, of which three were in Cheshire,⁴² but it was apparently under Bishop Knight and his immediate successors that the form and frequency of visitations, in which rural deans played such a large part, were standardized. By 1906, if not earlier, a system of visitation had been established which was still in use with minor modifications in the 1970s. It began with the rural dean visiting his parishes and distributing visitation and parish account forms which had to be returned to the bishop one week before his visitation. The forms were very detailed, especially on financial matters, since the diocesan authorities still retained a close control over parish expenditure. Episcopal visitation itself was often more formal and ceremonial than inquisitorial, and was usually accompanied by confirmations. From the first decade of the century, visitations were biennial, but they took eighteen months to complete.⁴³ In the 1960s and 1970s Bishop Grasar undertook visitations triennially, and the work of collecting and examining the parish account forms was carried out by a full-time treasurer who was first appointed during his episcopate.⁴⁴ Between visitations the diocesan authorities were informed about the situation in the parishes through the Lenten returns of baptisms, marriages, confirmations, converts, and numbers at mass and at Catholic schools,⁴⁵ and from the 1950s surveyors' reports on the condition of the fabric of Catholic property in the diocese were received regularly from the parishes.⁴⁶

There had been over 9,000 Cheshire Catholics at mass on Census Sunday in 1851,⁴⁷ and the Catholic population of the county was thought to be 45,000 by the end of the 19th century. Growth was even more impressive in the 20th century, however, for there were over 100,000 Catholics in Cheshire in 1950, and over 185,000 in 1974.⁴⁸ The considerable increase in numbers since 1900, which was not shown by other denominations,⁴⁹ was unevenly spread throughout the county, being chiefly concentrated in the hinterland of Manchester and in the Wirral peninsula on Merseyside. In 1950, for example, over half of the Catholics of the county lived on Merseyside and a quarter near Manchester, and in 1974 there were 68,000 Catholics in the hinterland of Manchester, over 20,000 of whom lived on the new estates at Wythenshawe, and 67,000 on Merseyside.⁵⁰ The concentration of Catholics in these two areas was reflected in the structure of diocesan organization. In 1898 there had been four rural deaneries in Cheshire centred on Stockport, Chester, Birkenhead, and Seacombe. In 1940 there were seven, of which three were centred on Wirral churches at Birkenhead, Cloughton, and Wallasey, and two on Stockport and Altrincham near Manchester, and in 1967 there were eleven of which eight were

⁴¹ S.E.A., Secretary's Room, Dioc. Char. Bk. 1889–1900; *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 17.

⁴² *Cath. Dir.* (1860), 95; (1870), 205.

⁴³ S.E.A., Attic Room, visit. and par. finance returns, 1906–68.

⁴⁴ Inf. from Fr. F. Pullen, episcopal secretary.

⁴⁵ S.E.A., Attic Room, vol. and bdles. of Lenten returns.

⁴⁶ S.E.A., Attic Room, visit. returns, 1955–9.

⁴⁷ *Eng. Caths.* 1850–1950, 49.

⁴⁸ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1950), 70–87; (1974), 42–86.

⁴⁹ Below, Protestant Nonconformity.

⁵⁰ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1950), 70–87; (1974), 42–86.

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made up of churches in those two areas. Throughout those years there was only one rural deanery in Shropshire, although another had been created by 1974.⁵¹

Just as the growth of the Catholic population under Bishop Brown had required new churches and more priests, so the even more rapid expansion of the 20th century was accompanied by much new building, and by problems about the supply of clergy. There had been little church building in the diocese under Bishops Knight and Carroll, but under their successor, Bishop Allen (1897–1908), twelve new churches and ten new missions were opened in the diocese.⁵² Between 1900 and 1950 twenty-seven new missions or parishes were created in Cheshire, and between 1950 and 1974 another 36 were opened. Catholics were building in most towns, but they were especially busy in certain areas. New churches were opened in Chester, for example, in 1959, 1960, and 1965, on the Wythenshawe estates in 1935, 1953, 1955, 1960, 1971, and 1973, at Birkenhead, where there had been serious bomb damage during the Second World War,⁵³ in 1951, 1959, and 1965, and in the Liverpool overspill area of Runcorn New Town in 1956 and 1971. It was an indication of Catholic strength in the county after the Second World War that such projects as the new church at Ashton on Mersey which cost £67,000 in 1965, the new secondary school at Wallasey which cost £157,000 in 1966, and the church at Marple which cost £47,000 in 1972,⁵⁴ were completed with little financial difficulty.⁵⁵

The provision of adequate numbers of clergy for the new parishes was less easy. The number of seculars active in the diocese did increase as the century progressed from 67 in 1900 to 83 in 1928, 122 in 1945, 157 in 1967, and 167 in 1974,⁵⁶ but many were brought to the diocese from elsewhere, especially from Ireland, because there were not enough native ordinands. In 1897 there had been 50 Shrewsbury students for the priesthood,⁵⁷ at a time when the diocese contained only about 60 churches and missions,⁵⁸ while in 1974 there were only 64 candidates, of whom a mere 38 were nearing completion of their studies, for a diocese of some 160 churches and chapels.⁵⁹ The number of seculars ordained to the priesthood within the diocese increased in the first decades of the century from 15 in the 1890s to 33 in the 1920s, but thereafter declined, especially during the war years,⁶⁰ so that under half of the priests who began work in the diocese during the 1950s had been ordained within it. By contrast, the numbers of regulars ordained in the diocese increased very rapidly as the century progressed, although there was a slight decline during the war years, so that by the 1950s three times as many regulars were being ordained as seculars.⁶¹ That reflected the growing strength of the new orders within the diocese, and within Cheshire in particular. There had been Capuchin Friars at Chester since 1858, and Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Rock Ferry since 1862, but the newer orders were not established within the county until after the First World War. Salesians started a missionary college at Shrigley Park near Macclesfield in 1929, the Irish Christian Brothers opened St. Anselm's College in Birkenhead in 1931, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate opened another mission at Crewe in 1933, and the Salvatorians started work at Christleton Hall in 1934. After the Second World War new Irish Christian

⁵¹ *Cath. Annual and Almanac for Dioc. of Liverpool and Shrews.* (1898), 101; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1941), 53; (1967), 61, 63; (1974), 33–4.

⁵² *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 17.

⁵³ S.E.A., Secretary's Room, blitz diary of Fr. M. Curran.

⁵⁴ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 23, 47; (1974), 10–11, 42–86.

⁵⁵ Sch. bldg. was assisted by min. funds.

⁵⁶ *Cath. Dir.* (1900), 272; (1928), 248; (1945), 424; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 209; (1974), 87.

⁵⁷ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 17.

⁵⁸ *Cath. Dir.* (1900), 272.

⁵⁹ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1974), 81.

⁶⁰ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 21.

⁶¹ S.E.A., Libr., 'Liber Ordinum', 1, 2; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 154–5.

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Brother schools were opened at Altrincham, Little Sutton, and Hooton, Friars Minor began work at Frodsham, the Sacred Heart Fathers opened a school at Malpas, and undertook the care of Baguley parish on the Wythenshawe estates, and the Salesians opened a retreat house in Bollington.

Congregations and orders of women also became well established in Cheshire after the First World War. There were ten convents in the county in 1900, five of which were run by the Sisters of the Holy Family. By 1945 other convents, schools, and homes run by women had been opened at Chester, Romiley, Bebington, Altrincham (three), Alderley Edge, and Birkenhead, and by 1974 there were 31 in the county, but only 36 in the diocese as a whole. The best represented congregations were the Sisters of the Holy Family and the various orders of the Sisters of Charity.⁶²

The decades after the Second World War also saw a great proliferation of diocesan societies and associations. The best supported societies were the Shrewsbury Secular Clergy fund started in the 1850s, the Shrewsbury Diocesan Children's Rescue Society established in 1889, and the various societies associated with the Lourdes diocesan pilgrimage. Diocesan branches of the Catholic Men's Society, the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of St. Columba, and the Serra International, an organization of laymen working to foster vocations to the priesthood, were also well supported.⁶³

⁶² *Shrews. Centenary Rec. passim*; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 90-128, 161-3; (1974), 42-86, 97-101; *Cath. Dir.* (1945), 422; *Eng. Caths. 1850-1950*, 442-63.

⁶³ *Cath. Dir.* (1945), 423; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1974), 139-55.

PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY

THE history of organized nonconformity in Cheshire begins with the Civil War and Interregnum. There were, it is true, puritan ministers in the county in quite large numbers from the 1570s, and puritan attitudes were becoming widespread amongst the laity, but complete and deliberate separatism was uncommon before 1640. That may have been because the ecclesiastical authorities, during Elizabeth I's reign at least, were favourably disposed towards puritan teaching which they saw as a way of winning people from the greater evil of popery. As a result exercises had been established in the diocese in 1584 with the full support of the bishop and the Privy Council with centres in Cheshire at Chester, Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Northwich. When that network crumbled in the early 1590s, exercises continued in the more puritan areas of the county, for example at Frodsham and Congleton, and municipal authorities at Chester, Congleton, and Nantwich continued to provide a platform for puritan preaching up to the Civil War.¹

The close connexion between puritanism and nonconformity in the county, however, is clearly shown by the distribution of puritan ministers and support and that of the early nonconformists. Puritanism was weak on the western side of the county—in the deanery of Malpas, on the Flintshire side of the Chester deanery, and in Wirral. Those were the areas, in fact, where Catholicism remained strongest.² Besides the municipalities of Chester and Nantwich, puritanism was most widespread in the centre and east of the county and especially in the countryside near Manchester.³ Significantly it was in just those areas that nonconformity was to find its first footings in the county and where it received its greatest support into comparatively modern times. The first Congregational church in Cheshire was at Dukinfield in the parish of Stockport,⁴ the first Baptist centre in the county at Hill Cliff in Grappenhall parish, both within 15 miles of Manchester; and early Quaker strength was at Mobberley, Frodsham, and Congleton. Moreover it was in the north-east of the county that John Wesley first preached. The returns of conventicles made in 1669,⁵ the licences for meeting-places granted under the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672,⁶ and the registrations of nonconformist places of worship over the long period 1689 to 1852,⁷ all show that dissent remained strongest in the north and east of the county until well into the 19th century,⁸ despite its rapid expansion following the Methodist revival. It was not, in fact, until the growth of industry and population on Merseyside in the later 19th century that nonconformity expanded in the Wirral peninsula, and even in 1970 a high proportion of nonconformist meetings were still situated in the east of the county.⁹

¹ R. C. Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 23–115, 138–9, 141; *Hist. Congleton*, ed. W. B. Stephens, 211.

² Above, Roman Catholicism.

³ Richardson, *Puritanism*, 7–9.

⁴ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.*, 340.

⁵ *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.*, ed. G. L. Turner, i. 168–73.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. 691–9. These figures do not include Quakers and some Particular Baptists who refused to take out licences.

⁷ Under the Act of Toleration, 1689, and the Places of Religious Worship Act, 1812: *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.* xxv. 214.

⁸ See table at end of chapter.

⁹ *Congreg. Yearbk.* (1970–1), 132–6; *Baptist Handbk.* (1970), 119–20; *Friends Bk. of Meetings* (1973); *Statistical Return of Methodist Ch.*, Department for Chapel Affairs, 1970, i. 63–71; ii. 7–17; *Salvation Army Yearbk.* (1970), 54; *Christian Science Jnl.* (1970), 7; *General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Ch. Handbk.* (1970–2), 20–5.

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The reasons advanced for the particular distribution of puritan divines in the county before the Civil War seem equally applicable to the distribution of nonconformity after it.¹⁰ The proximity to the areas of nonconformist strength of Manchester, a town renowned for its religious radicalism and important nationally and locally as a trading centre, was clearly significant. It also seems likely that the local spread of nonconformity was encouraged by the trading routes passing from Manchester through north-east Cheshire to London, Bristol, and North Wales. The strength of nonconformity in the market towns of Chester, Congleton, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Stockport which lay on these routes, which in later times John Wesley followed, supports that conclusion.¹¹ Perhaps most important, however, was the weakness of the Established Church in the area, for it was in the north and east of the county that especially large ecclesiastical parishes were to be found.¹² Moreover the scattered nature of settlement in the east of the county, for example in the Macclesfield forest area, had discouraged the building of Anglican chapels.¹³ The difficulty of attendance at the services of the Established Church, and the weakness of ecclesiastical discipline in these parishes which resulted, probably encouraged the growth of nonconformity.

With the collapse of the diocesan administration in the early stages of the Civil War there was a struggle in Cheshire, as elsewhere, for control of the parish churches between those who sought the establishment of a Presbyterian system of church government and those who wanted individual congregations to be allowed a large degree of independence. The considerable support given by the clergy of the county to the Solemn League and Covenant in the autumn of 1643 does not of itself indicate a preference for Presbyterianism, for it is known that there were Independents like Philip Nye amongst the signatories,¹⁴ and the earlier Cheshire petition to the Commons of 1641 had advocated that 'congregations' should have 'power to execute ecclesiastical censures within themselves'.¹⁵ By 1646, however, it is clear that Presbyterianism had found more support amongst the clergy, than Independency, for the latter apparently could boast only two or three churches in the county and the possibility of establishing two or three more, and only the society at Dukinfield under Samuel Eaton and Timothy Taylor was flourishing.¹⁶ It was Samuel Eaton who composed a petition against the establishment of Presbyterian government as proposed in the Ordinance of June 1646, but his support was apparently largely from the laity.

No Presbyterian system was established in Cheshire like that in neighbouring Lancashire at the time although an ordination was organized by John Ley, the preacher at Astbury, in August 1648, in accordance with the Directory, and Presbyterian ministers may have held a few meetings among themselves as well.¹⁷ The strength of Presbyterianism among the clergy, however, is shown by the *Cheshire Attestation to the Testimony of our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London* drawn up by Ley in 1648 and signed by 59 Cheshire ministers.¹⁸ Though they acknowledged that several of their Independent brethren were 'learned, godly, charitable, and kind to their Presbyterian brethren', they regarded Independency as

¹⁰ For what follows see Richardson, *Puritanism*, 9–17; Ag. Hist. Rev. Supplement (1970), 178–99; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 295–315.

¹¹ Ag. Hist. Eng. and Wales, iv, ed. Joan Thirsk, pp. 562–3; Jnl. of John Wesley, ed. C. Curnock (1906–19), i, 446; ii, 175, 224, 234, 296, 299, 443–4, 520; iv, 34–6.

¹² J.C.A.S. liv, 29; *Life of Martindale*, 122.

¹³ Ag. Hist. Rev. Supplement (1970), 188–91.

¹⁴ F. J. Powicke, *Hist. Ches. Co. Union of Congreg. Ch.*, 2–3.

¹⁵ A. Gordon, *Ches. Classis Minutes, 1691–1745*, 100.

¹⁶ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. xxv, 340–3.

¹⁷ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 103–5; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. xxiv.

¹⁸ *Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews, appendix i.

PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY

'an error in itself', and 'if not the natural mother, yet . . . a tender nurse and patroness to heretical opinions'.¹⁹

In the autumn of 1653 a voluntary association was formed among these ministers and their churches, for 'mutual advice and strengthening one another'.²⁰ Their first organized meeting was at Knutsford in October.²¹ It acquired some appearance of Presbyterian usage by the admission in July 1655 of ruling elders among its members. Under the title of the 'Associated Ministers in Cheshire' it was recognized by the Manchester Presbyterian Classis in April 1656 as a body that could confer ordination. It did not survive the Restoration,²² however, when Presbyterian and Independent alike were forced from the parish churches of the country.

Outside the parish churches the more radical sects were also at work in Cheshire during the Interregnum. Aided by the pioneering work of John Wigan in Manchester, the Baptist cause spread with the Parliamentary army²³ down the Mersey and Weaver valleys through Warrington into Cheshire. By December 1651 a church was active near Warrington in the parish of Grappenhall attended by people from Reddish (Lancs.), Warrington, Whitley Green, Weaverham, Chester, and Liverpool. There was apparently no regular meeting-place at the time, but it was at Hill Cliff in Grappenhall parish in 1663 that a plot of ground was acquired for Baptist burial²⁴ and near it was built the mother church of early Cheshire Baptists.²⁵ There may have been other early churches at Nantwich, where Shrewsbury Baptists came to be baptized, and at Great Warford.²⁶

During the 1650s the Quakers also became established in the county, although their eccentric behaviour²⁷ sometimes lost them potential converts, as well as making them influential enemies. Most of the early missionary work was carried out by John Lawson, Richard Hubberthorne, and Richard Hickock. Of the three Hickock was the only native of the county, being from Chester, where he had the distinction in 1653 of being one of the first Quakers to suffer imprisonment and was released only through the intervention of the Protector's servant, Richard Minshall.²⁸ After release he left Chester for north Staffordshire where he preached successfully near Leek,²⁹ and in 1656 he was active in Ireland where he was imprisoned by Henry Cromwell with Elizabeth Morgan, another Quaker missionary from Chester.³⁰ He later returned to the city and was amongst the Quakers imprisoned there in 1660.³¹

In the autumn of 1653 through the efforts of Hubberthorne and Lawson the nucleus of a meeting was established at Malpas, and early in 1654 another sympathetic separatist community was contacted at Congleton.³² In Chester itself, however, the authorities dealt harshly with Quaker missionaries³³ and it was while Hubberthorne was actually in prison in the city that he met and convinced Thomas Yarwood, who in turn carried the new teaching to 'seekers' at Mobberley, afterwards the Morley Meeting. By the end of 1654 the many Quakers imprisoned at

¹⁹ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. xxvi.

²⁰ *Life of Martindale*, 112.

²¹ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. xxxii–xxxiii.

²² Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 106; *Life of Martindale*, 112–14, 117–18.

²³ W. T. Whitley, *Baptist Bibliog.* i (London, 1916), 72, 76, 90, 204; for importance of the army in spread of Baptist faith see A. C. Underwood, *Hist. Eng. Baptists*, 64.

²⁴ W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of NW. Eng.* (London, 1913), 41–6, 57.

²⁵ *Trans. Salop. Arch. Soc.* lix. 48; *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* v. 154–68; J. Kenworthy, *Hist. of Baptist Ch. at Hill Cliff*, 47–51.

²⁶ *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* ii. 237–8; vi. 25–36.

²⁷ F. Sanders, 'Quakers in Chester Under Protectorate', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiv. 36–68; W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 123–4.

²⁸ J. Besse, *Collection of Sufferings of Quakers*, i (London, 1753), 99.

²⁹ V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 117–18; Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 392.

³⁰ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 216; for Elizabeth Morgan see also *ibid.* 388–9.

³¹ Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings of Quakers* (1738), ii. 87.

³² Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 123–4; *Hist. Congleton*, 236.

³³ Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 99–102; *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiv. 36–68.

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Chester city gaol, and the missionary activity of Hickock, Yarwood, and Elizabeth Morgan indicate that a flourishing group of Quakers had been established there.³⁴ Of all the early Cheshire Quakers those in Chester were to face the severest persecution in the coming years.³⁵ By 1657 a further meeting had been established at the house of William Gandy at Frandley.³⁶

Quaker organization and influence developed quickly in the county. At the end of 1655 Hubberthorne publicly disputed with Martindale on Knutsford Heath, and other disputations took place at Shadow-Moss in Northenden parish and at Swettenham. Moreover Quaker pamphlets, apparently produced at Chester, Warrington, and Stafford, were circulating in the county.³⁷ In 1657 Cheshire Quakers contributed the large sum of £19 5s. to the 'service of truth abroad'³⁸ and in June of that year a General Meeting held by Fox at Frandley apparently attracted 3,000.³⁹ In 1658 and 1659 Cheshire representatives were present at further General Meetings at Skipton (Yorks. W.R.), and by 1659 a fund for the county was being kept at Chester.⁴⁰

It is difficult to estimate the strength of Quakerism in Cheshire by 1660 because its influence crossed parish boundaries. It is clear, however, that Friends outnumbered Baptists and that besides the concentrations of Quakers indicated by the nascent meetings at Chester, Frandley, Malpas, Morley, and Congleton, there were smaller groups elsewhere.⁴¹ In the autumn of 1660 some 112 Quakers were held in the county gaol and a further 10 were imprisoned in the city for refusing to take the oath of allegiance,⁴² but there is evidence that they were by no means the only Quakers in the county,⁴³ so their real numbers were greater.

When after the Restoration the ejected clergy petitioned for reinstatement in their livings or for other preferment,⁴⁴ at least 13 Cheshire ministers were removed in 1660 to make way for their sequestered predecessors. A further 29 ministers were ejected as a result of the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Of those dispossessed 9 eventually conformed,⁴⁵ but 17 others took out licences in 1672 as Presbyterian teachers (although 5 of them were for places outside the county) and 2 as Independent teachers.⁴⁶ William Cook, sometime curate of St. Michael's, Chester, was licensed in 1672 as a Presbyterian in one house and as an Independent in another but most ejected ministers as yet kept strictly to their pre-1660 allegiances.

Few ejected ministers were silenced altogether. Besides those who later conformed Wilson was still preaching in Chester in 1664; Thomas Harrison, the former vicar of St. Oswald's in Chester, is known to have been active in the city in 1665 and in Bromborough in 1669, and Adam Martindale became the chaplain of Lord Delamere at Dunham. For some, however, as for the Baptists and Quakers, the 1660s and 1670s were a time of persecution. William Cook was first imprisoned in 1663 by the bishop of Chester for preaching after ejection, as was Harrison, and both were harried during the 1660s for holding conventicles. The city and county

³⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 125, 127.

³⁵ Below.

³⁶ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 331, 349; Quakers were active there in 1653-4: Friends' House Library, Meeting-House List *sub* Frandley.

³⁷ *Life of Martindale*, 115-17.

³⁸ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 324.

³⁹ *Short Jnl. and Itinerary Jnl. of George Fox*, ed. N. Penney, 51.

⁴⁰ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 325-9.

⁴¹ At Pownall Fee, at Runcorn, and in Great Budworth parish: J.C.A.S. N.S. xiv. 77-84. Those at Pownall Fee joined

the Morley Meeting by 1665; Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings*, ii. 90-1.

⁴² Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings*, ii. 85-7; Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 102.

⁴³ Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings*, ii. 87; J.C.A.S. N.S. xiv. 36-68; Chester City R.O., MF/88; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34-5.

⁴⁴ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 118.

⁴⁵ *Calamy Revised*, p. xii.

⁴⁶ For the dispossessed and their subsequent careers, see *ibid.* 71, 82, 91, 132, 135, 177, 179, 199, 224, 250, 251, 257, 300, 320, 343, 359, 404, 437, 536.

gaols in Chester saw the sufferings of many nonconformists during these years. That was largely because of the diligence of Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, a deputy lieutenant and governor of Chester castle. His letters to the Government reveal his concern about the situation in Chester and the surrounding countryside.⁴⁷ In 1665 he reported the activities of the Baptists and of Harrison's Independents in the city, arrested Harrison, Bullen, and Blackwell of Bidston, and took security for the behaviour of other nonconformist leaders at Chester, Frankby, Bidston, Irby, Laughton, Mollington, and Backford.⁴⁸ In 1667 he interfered in the election of the recorder of Chester to hinder the candidature of the Presbyterian, Ratcliffe,⁴⁹ and in 1669 he arrested John Garside, the leading Presbyterian in the county.⁵⁰ In 1670 he harried the flourishing Quaker community in the city.⁵¹ Other magistrates and to a lesser extent the diocesan authorities were also active in persecuting nonconformists in these years, especially after the passage of the second Conventicle Act in 1670.⁵²

It is not easy to assess the numerical strength of dissent between the Restoration and the passing of the Toleration Act because of the unreliability of the visitation returns on which such an assessment must largely be based, and because nonconformity was not contained within the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes.⁵³ It seems clear, however, that despite persecution it continued to grow. The incomplete presentments made in 1665⁵⁴ show Quakers in 4 parishes of the city of Chester, and in as many as 21 other parishes in the centre and west of the county, whilst Baptists were reported in 8 parishes.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Sheldon's inquiry of 1669 revealed at least 40 regular conventicles in Cheshire.⁵⁶ Another indication of the strength of nonconformity is given by the number of licences granted under the terms of the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, although they did not include the Quakers and probably some Particular Baptists who refused to take out licences.⁵⁷ The figures show the continuing support for Presbyterianism in the county, and that Independency had gained little during the Interregnum. During the year that the Declaration was in force 26 'teachers' were licensed in Cheshire: one as a Baptist, 6 as Independents including a successful preacher at Congleton,⁵⁸ and the remainder as Presbyterians. Only one minister, John Garside, a Presbyterian, had a general licence. He appears to have preached at Prestbury and Mottram in the east of the county.⁵⁹ Not all Nonconformist preachers were licensed, however, for prosecutions record the teaching of at least one other Baptist and three Presbyterians.⁶⁰ Besides licences for teachers 58 houses were licensed throughout the county, most of them for Presbyterian worship.⁶¹

After 1689 some persecution did continue in isolated places such as Congleton and Chester,⁶² but the Toleration Act eased the situation for nonconformists and enabled further expansion and consolidation. In July 1689 alone 32 places of nonconformist worship were registered at quarter sessions,⁶³ and in the next ten

⁴⁷ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1668-9, 378, 394, 396, 404, 533; 1670, 219, 222, 248-9, 261, 273, 313.

⁴⁸ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. xlv-xlvii.

⁴⁹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1667, 14, 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 1668-9, 354, 394.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 1670, 222, 261, 273.

⁵² Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 103-5; Chester City R.O., MF/88; QSF/79, ff. 91, 100-2, 106, 116, 136, 139, 143, 201, 235, 260, 265, 286, 293; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34; QJB 3/2, ff. 5, 9, 11. For later persecution see Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 105-12; Chester City R.O., QSF/82, f. 270; SIG. 1; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/39-60; EFC 1/1/1.

⁵³ Cf. V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 120.

⁵⁴ No returns for deaneries of Nantwich, Middlewich, or Macclesfield.

⁵⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34.

⁵⁶ The nature of the returns prevent exactitude: *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.* i. 168-73; ii. 691-9.

⁵⁷ *Trans. Salop. Arch. Soc.* lix. 49.

⁵⁸ *Hist. Congleton*, 229.

⁵⁹ *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.* ii. 691-8.

⁶⁰ Chester City R.O., QSF/79(2), ff. 100-1; QSF/82(5), f. 270; Ches. R.O., QJB 3/2, ff. 9, 11; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. xlvii, which lists others.

⁶¹ *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.* ii. 691.

⁶² W. C. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 603; *Hist. Congleton*, 230.

⁶³ Chester City R.O., QSF/85, ff. 56, 73, 132; Ches. R.O., QDR, f. 1.

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years some 230 different premises were registered.⁶⁴ Although probably few were lasting, the growth of dissent which they reveal is supported by what is known, at least about the more radical sects. Cheshire Quakers, for example, reported to the London Yearly Meeting in 1689 that 'people of the world come in', and in 1690 that there had been 'an increase, one meeting revived, many convinced and things well'. Good reports continued to be received from the county until the 1710s.⁶⁵ Similarly the Baptists had increased from the two or three pre-1669 churches to 22 by 1713.⁶⁶

Of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists less is known and the evidence is contradictory. By 1689 there was little to distinguish the two, since persecution had sobered the intolerance shown by the would-be Presbyterians of 1648 and had led them to value, with the Independents, the autonomy of individual congregations.⁶⁷ It is often difficult, therefore, to distinguish between the two, although it does seem that, until divided by Unitarianism, Presbyterianism, supported amongst others by the leading divine and author, Matthew Henry,⁶⁸ remained the stronger in this county. It seems likely that most of the meetings registered after 1689 were Presbyterian or Congregational,⁶⁹ but by the end of the century they seem to have had few ministers in Cheshire. Only four of the ejected of 1660–2 were still alive in 1689,⁷⁰ and a review of all ministers by the managers of the London Common Fund in 1690–2 reported only 14, mostly Presbyterian, active in the county, although they do seem to have served a number of different congregations.⁷¹

There is little doubt of the extent of the expansion of dissent in Cheshire by the 1710s. Gastrell, the new bishop of Chester in 1714, compiled a report on his diocese which included information about dissenters and their congregations, and which, coupled with other evidence, shows how widespread nonconformity had become. It has proved possible to identify 50 congregations at this time, of which Gastrell noted 45.⁷² Of these the Presbyterians had 16, the Congregationalists 2,⁷³ and the Quakers 11,⁷⁴ while the Baptists apparently had 22 different meetings.⁷⁵ The leading nonconformist centres were Chester with four meetings⁷⁶ and dissenters, according to one contemporary, in excess of a thousand,⁷⁷ Nantwich with 157 Presbyterians, 109 Baptists, and 13 Quakers, Macclesfield with 100 Presbyterians and 80 Quakers, and Knutsford with a Presbyterian meeting and 74 dissenting families. Other important centres were Wybunbury, Sandbach, Astbury, Mottram, Frodsham, Rostherne,⁷⁸ and Dean Row. In 1718 a Presbyterian minister at Chester thought that the dissenters of Cheshire could make up about a quarter of the county's voters,⁷⁹ and the evidence of new meeting-houses built in the period provides a further indication of nonconformist strength.⁸⁰ Gastrell's report, however, by also listing the totals of families in each parish, shows that, despite this expansion, nonconformists were still only a small percentage of Cheshire's total population.⁸¹

Expansion brought greater sophistication to the organization of dissent in

⁶⁴ See table at end of chapter.

⁶⁵ Friends' Ho. Libr. Yearly Meeting Minutes, i. 209, 233, 252, 294, 328; iv. 20, 109.

⁶⁶ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 366.

⁶⁷ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 106–7, 117–20.

⁶⁸ For Henry see Chester City R.O., CR 151/86, p. 23; CR 151/88–99.

⁶⁹ Those at Chester were Chester City R.O., QSF/85, ff. 56, 73–4; QSF/87, ff. 2, 62; QSF/88, ff. 7, 32, 47.

⁷⁰ *Calamy Revised*, 117, 135, 251, 320; one had moved from Ches.: *ibid.* 117.

⁷¹ *Freedom after Ejection*, ed. A. Gordon, 15–17, 176; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. lvi–lvii.

⁷² Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 98–310.

⁷³ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. lx–lxi, quoting Dr.

William's Libr., Evans MS. p. 13.

⁷⁴ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List; Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/2.

⁷⁵ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 367.

⁷⁶ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 98–124.

⁷⁷ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. lxi.

⁷⁸ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 124–310.

⁷⁹ Dr. William's Libr., Evans MS. p. 13; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. lxi.

⁸⁰ Ches. Monthly Meeting: *Some Account of the Trust Property of Friends* (1855), 5–14, 21–3; *Jnl. Friends Hist. Soc.* li. 179–89; Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 58, 61–2, 124; Chester City R.O., QSF/85, ff. 132, 204; QSF/92, f. 136; Ches. R.O., QDR, ff. 1–10.

⁸¹ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i, *passim*.

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Cheshire. Quakerism illustrates this best.⁸² By 1676 Quakers were holding men's Particular Meetings, or meetings for worship, apparently weekly,⁸³ at ten centres in the county: Malpas, Congleton, Nantwich, Helsby or Newton by Frodsham, Chester, Morley, Middlewich, Norton, Frandley, and Stockport.⁸⁴ For organization, discipline, and administration those meetings had been divided in 1668 into three Monthly Meetings held at Morley, Nantwich, and Frandley.⁸⁵ They united as the Cheshire Quarterly Meeting, also begun in 1668.⁸⁶ Reports were regularly being sent by it to the Yearly Meeting in London by 1682.⁸⁷ A parallel organization of women's meetings had also been set up in the county by 1672,⁸⁸ against the opposition of some Friends,⁸⁹ but they remained much less important in Quaker administration. Quaker organization in Cheshire, although frequently rent by squabbles and rivalries in its early years,⁹⁰ provided the means of collecting considerable sums for Friends at home and abroad, enabled the regular recording of the details of their sufferings, provided, where necessary, relief for their poorest brethren, arranged and sanctioned Quaker marriages, and settled disputes amongst Quakers without recourse to the courts.⁹¹

Cheshire Baptists were not so thoroughly organized. The theology of Hill Cliff and its associated churches was Particular, and they remained fiercely autonomous.⁹² Nevertheless, the minute book of a Particular church at Hurst Farm in Stoke upon Tern parish (Salop.) shows that there was some degree of organization among the early Baptist churches of the region. Members were able to move from congregation to congregation, and meetings were held in Cheshire at Bostock, Hill Cliff, and Frodsham.⁹³ In 1689 a member of the Hill Cliff church travelled to London to represent his church at the Particular Baptist Assembly, and in 1721 Francis Turner of Warford joined his church in fellowship with an Association of Baptist churches centred on Rossendale (Lancs.). Other Particular churches in the north of the county may have joined the short-lived Association started in 1736 by David Crosley in the Mersey and Irwell valleys.⁹⁴ A further group of churches centred on Samuel Acton's flourishing congregation at Nantwich appears to have been General Baptist,⁹⁵ and although the Nantwich church itself was known to the General Assembly of General Baptists in 1701 and 1733,⁹⁶ it had no relations with that Assembly.⁹⁷ In the 1750s the views of John Johnson found support in Cheshire at High Legh, Toft, Hill Cliff, Bollington, Congleton, and Millington where he is known to have preached.⁹⁸

As far as the Presbyterians and Independents were concerned, there had been a meeting of the messengers of the Associated Churches of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire in 1674,⁹⁹ and some degree of organization is indicated by the ease with which Adam Martindale travelled through Cheshire, Lancashire, and Staffordshire

⁸² For Quaker organization see D. J. Steel, *Sources for Nonconf. Genealogy and Family Hist.* 609–25.

⁸³ As in Chester: Chester City R.O., MF/88; QSF/79, ff. 101, 136.

⁸⁴ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/1, f. 2; EFC 4/1/1, f. 1; EFC 2/1/1, sub Sept. 1678.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 2/1/1, f. 7; 5/1/1, ff. 1–5; 4/1/1, f. 1.

⁸⁶ Inf. from the Librarian, Friends Ho.; cf. *Jnl. Friends Hist. Soc.* ii. 61 n. which gives the year as 1667.

⁸⁷ Friends' Ho. Libr. Yearly Meeting Minutes, i. 116.

⁸⁸ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/4/1; EFC 2/3/1; EFC 4/2/1; EFC 5/2/1.

⁸⁹ Richard Smith, *The Light Unchangeable: and Truth and Good Order Justified against Error and Disorder* (London, 1677), 8 (Friends' Ho. Libr. Vol. of Tracts no. 35/29).

⁹⁰ Ibid. *passim*; Alexander Lawrence, *Answer to a Bk.*

Published by Richard Smith of . . . Chester (1677) (Friends' Ho. Libr. Tracts, box 45); Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/1.

⁹¹ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/1.

⁹² *Trans. Salop. Arch. Soc.* lix. 48.

⁹³ M. H. Ridgway, 'Anabaptists in Salop. and Ches. in the 18th century', 4 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 2, 4–6.

⁹⁴ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 58, 90–1, 94–5.

⁹⁵ Whitley, *Baptist Bibliog.* i, sub Samuel Acton; Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 121–2. The Nantwich ch. became Particular later and had relations with the Rossendale Assoc.: Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 135.

⁹⁶ *Minutes of General Assembly of General Baptist Ch. in Eng.* ed. W. T. Whitley, i. lviii.

⁹⁷ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 122.

⁹⁸ *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* iii. 55–60.

⁹⁹ *Calamy Revised*, 359.

visiting his co-religionists,¹ and by the preparation of a loyal address by various nonconformists of the county for James II on his visit to Chester in 1687.² A county-wide organization, however, was not established until the union of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers on the basis of the London 'Heads of Agreement' in 1691. The Cheshire Classis, as the meetings of this body of ministers came to be called, usually met twice a year at Knutsford, and although ministers from outside the county often attended, it remained, until united with the Lancashire Provincial Meeting in 1765, a predominantly Cheshire body.³ Besides prayers and a public sermon the meetings were devoted to the preparation and ordination of ministers, the administration of grants from the recently established London Fund, and of a Cheshire Fund, and the settlement of disputes.⁴ The minutes of the Classis do not survive after 1745, but by then its fortunes were declining.⁵

The episcopate of Gastrell (1714–25) appears to have been a high point for the older sects, for thereafter congregations dwindled and others drifted into Unitarianism. Registrations of places of nonconformist worship show the decline most graphically,⁶ as does the history of the individual sects during the next decades. Quaker meetings were discontinued at Eaton by Congleton and at Malpas by 1746, and others were in difficulties at Frandley and Middlewich.⁷ Dwindling membership among the Quakers led to a remodelling of their organization in the county on a smaller scale. In 1783 the Cheshire Quarterly Meeting was joined with that of Staffordshire to form the Staffordshire and Cheshire Quarterly Meeting,⁸ and in 1794 the Frandley and Nantwich Monthly Meetings united to form one Monthly Meeting for Preparative Meetings at Frandley, Chester, Newton, Sutton, Nantwich, and Middlewich.⁹ Only the Morley Monthly Meeting of the original organization of the county survived. That was partly because the membership of the Derbyshire Low Leighton Meeting had been transferred to it in 1739.¹⁰

By the mid 18th century some small Baptist country churches were fast declining. Warford was in the worst plight by 1759 with only two members, but some town churches were doing little better. The Chester cause shrank into obscurity after 1720, and at Nantwich the church in Barker Street was let to the Methodists in 1762 after two successive ministers had failed to maintain the congregation. The society at Hill Cliff also was temporarily closed in 1783 after protracted theological disputes.¹¹

The Presbyterians undoubtedly suffered most from the effects of Unitarianism, while Congregational churches tended to hold to Trinitarian doctrines. By the 1770s former Presbyterian churches at Allstock, Chester, Dean Row, Congleton, Dukinfield, Hale, Hyde, Knutsford, Macclesfield,¹² Nantwich, Sale, and Stockport had all become Unitarian although they often retained their former name. Only six churches survived as orthodox; at Chester, Hatherlow, Northwich, Partington, Stockport, and Tintwistle, and all were weak and struggling. Orthodox dissent in general had become very weak by 1770. Only one new chapel, at Hale, had been built since 1720, and that was to replace one at Ringway which had been seized by the diocesan authorities.¹³ Furthermore, the Cheshire Classis had long since ceased

¹ *Life of Martindale*, 202.

² Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. li.

³ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 3, 106–7, 142–4.

⁴ *Ibid.* 122–3, 127–36; Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*.

⁵ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 91–2, 144–5.

⁶ See table.

⁷ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List sub Eaton, Malpas, Frandley, Middlewich; *Hist. Congleton*, 240.

⁸ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/3, sub 1783; V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 123–4.

⁹ Ches. R.O., EFC 5/1/6, f. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 3/1; 2/1/2.

¹¹ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 66, 122, 125, 154–5; Underwood, *Eng. Baptists*, 133–43.

¹² *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* x. 142–7.

¹³ Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.*, 13–15; S. H. Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 10–13; G. E. Evans, *Vestiges of Protestant Dissent*, 4, 44–5, 54–6, 65–6, 78–80, 97–9, 109–10, 124–5, 160–2, 178–80, 216–17, 231–3.

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to exercise the influence it once possessed. Attendance at its meetings was declining by the 1740s. After 1745 it met only once a year, and was amalgamated with the Lancashire Provincial Meeting in 1765. By then it was a solely Unitarian body.¹⁴ By 1773 a minister in Chester could write: 'The dissenting interest in this county in general is in a very declining languishing state, and some of the congregations are likely to drop very soon. Congleton and Wheelock are at this time without ministers, and likely to be so, as there are very few to minister to.'¹⁵

This evidence of decline is strongly supported by the returns made for Bishop Porteous's primary visitation in 1778. Presbyterians, Independents, and Quakers all still maintained meeting-houses in Chester itself, but except for the Independents, 'the most modern sect' whose meeting-house was 'new and neat', were declining fast, and the same fate was predicted for the Independents. The Presbyterian meeting in the parish of Holy Trinity which Matthew Henry had taught had greatly diminished in numbers. The Baptist chapel at Brassey Green had such a small congregation that it seldom met, while most of the Baptists at Nantwich had conformed to the Church. Presbyterians, or Unitarians as they now were, had diminished sharply in the parishes of Congleton, Wilmslow, Great Budworth, Witton, Lymm, and Knutsford and Quaker support had shrunk at Little Leigh, Wilmslow, and Bosley.¹⁶ The optimism with which the Anglican clergy viewed this trend is only too clear from the returns, but they also indicate how widespread Methodism was becoming in the county. Methodist expansion, in fact, was the first indication of a dissenting revival, a revival which was to lead to dissenters rivalling Churchmen in the county by 1851.¹⁷

John Wesley had first preached in Cheshire in March 1738 when he visited Knutsford while returning south from Manchester,¹⁸ but it was not until 1745 that he made contact with a number of the religious societies that already existed in the county, and began a regular series of preaching trips to Cheshire.¹⁹ During the next three years he preached extensively in the east of the county laying the basis for Methodist societies at Roger Moss's house near Rode Hall, at Oldfield Brow near Altrincham, at Woodley near Stockport, at Shrigley Fold, at Booth Bank near the Manchester-Knutsford road in Rostherne parish, and at Northwich, Astbury, and Congleton.²⁰ The work of John Nelson, Christopher Hopper, and John Bennet, whose 'round' was merged with the York circuit covering Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire,²¹ and the visits of Wesley between 1748 and 1753 consolidated Methodism in the county,²² and by 1753 further societies had been established at Alpraham,²³ Acton, Chester, Poole by Nantwich, and Macclesfield.²⁴

In its early years Methodism in Cheshire faced persecution. In January 1750 there was trouble at Altrincham, and in the summer of 1752 when a mob in Chester pulled down the Methodist preaching house in St. Martin's Ash the mayor refused to

¹⁴ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 88-92, 144-5; *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* iii(2), pp. 169-70.

¹⁵ Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.* 15.

¹⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, lii, pp. 26, 30-1; liii, pp. 5-6, 8, 10-11, 44, 49-50; liv, pp. 2, 6, 8-10.

¹⁷ Below.

¹⁸ *Wesley's Jnl.* i. 446.

¹⁹ For pre-Wesleyan religious meetings and preachers see F. F. Bretherton, *Early Methodism in Chester*, 1-10; Joan P. Alcock, *Methodism in Congleton* (Congleton, 1968), 1; B. Smith, *Methodism in Macclesfield* (London, 1875), 17-19; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii, 22-37.

²⁰ *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 175, 224, 234, 296, 299, 375 n.; Smith, *Meth. in Macclesfield*, 17-19.

²¹ Bennet had been active since he first met Wesley in 1742: *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 375 n.; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 26-8; *Proc. Wesley Hist. Soc.* xxvi(3), p. 33.

²² Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 8-9, 26-8, 269; Smith, *Meth. in Macclesfield*, 37-42; *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 374-6, 443-4, 520; iv. 14, 34-6, 56; *Letters of John Wesley*, ed. J. Telford (London, 1931), iii. 62-3, 96; *Proc. Wesley Hist. Soc.* xxvi(3), pp. 33-5.

²³ A society had flourished there before Methodist preaching: Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 2-3; E. R. Rose, 'Meth. in Ches. to 1800', T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 24.

²⁴ *Jnl. of Lancs. and Ches. Wesley Hist. Soc.* ii(4), p. 75; *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 14, 56; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 26-7.

restrain or punish them.²⁵ In 1753 another mob at Nantwich treated Wesley himself and his hearers very roughly and destroyed their chapel.²⁶ In the next decade sporadic persecution continued at Chester, Tattenhall, Northwich, Stockport, and Congleton,²⁷ but some societies benefited from the protection of local landowners. Richard Davenport of Calveley Hall near Alpraham, for example, protected Alpraham Methodists from rioters who wished to remove them from the parish,²⁸ and George Catton of Huntington Hall near Chester opened his house for preaching.²⁹ More damaging to Methodism in the county than persecution, however, were the infiltration of Moravian doctrines into some of the societies,³⁰ and John Bennet's break with Wesley in 1752. A strict Calvinist, he took with him the whole of the Stockport society, and until his death in 1759 troubled other groups by preaching against Wesley.³¹ The defection of James Scholfield in 1757 had similar results.³²

Despite such difficulties Methodism grew very rapidly in the county,³³ partly because its characteristic organization in circuits enabled it to reach societies too small to support their own minister or too isolated to share one with a neighbouring congregation.³⁴ Initially Cheshire had been in Bennet's York 'round', and, although the Conference minutes of 1749 speak of a Cheshire circuit,³⁵ it was probably not until the formation of the Manchester circuit in 1752 that Bennet's enormous area was finally split up. The Manchester circuit stretched from Bolton to Mow Cop and into North Wales and included all the early Cheshire societies.³⁶ As Methodism spread, however, it in turn proved too large and unmanageable, and in 1765 a circuit based on Chester was formed from it.³⁷ This arrangement was short-lived for in 1770, when the number of circuits in England was increased to fifty, Lancashire and Cheshire were divided further between circuits with their heads at Chester, Macclesfield, Liverpool, and Manchester.³⁸ These were initially known as Cheshire and Lancashire North and South, but in 1771 their names were changed to those of the circuit towns.³⁹ That based on Macclesfield included the Congleton and Alderley Edge areas,⁴⁰ that on Manchester the north-east of the county, and that on Liverpool apparently the Frodsham area,⁴¹ while the remainder of Cheshire lay in the Chester circuit.⁴² The first chapel in Cheshire to be built expressly for the Methodists was at Stockport in 1759, but the most important early Methodist chapel in the county was opened in Chester in 1765. It was built in the form of an octagon apparently at Wesley's suggestion and proved so successful that the Conference of 1770 recommended that the form should be used when other chapels were built, so that the Chester chapel became the forerunner of a number of other octagons.⁴³

²⁵ Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 32–5; *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 36; *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 155–6; *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxviii. 27.

²⁶ *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 56; *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 110.

²⁷ *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 371, 446, 522; v. 85; *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 155–6; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 9–11; *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxviii. 27–8.

²⁸ *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 21.

²⁹ Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 28.

³⁰ *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxviii. 23.

³¹ *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 62–386; this may account for the slow growth in Stockport: *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 372; *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxviii. 28.

³² Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 41–2.

³³ *New Hist. Methodism*, ed. W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, & G. Eayrs, i. 369; R. Currie, *Methodism Divided*, 21 n.; *Methodist Conference Minutes* (1749–1770), 40, 53, 71, 76, 84, 91. For what follows see *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxviii. 22–37.

³⁴ For this point see F. Tillyard, 'Distribution of Free Ch. in

Eng.' *Sociological Rev.* xxvii. 1–18.

³⁵ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1749), 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.* (1766), 53; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 18–19; *Jnl. of Lancs. and Ches. Wesley Hist. Soc.* ii(4), p. 75; ii (6), p. 111.

³⁷ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1766–7), 53, 71; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 71.

³⁸ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1770–1), 91, 98.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 107–8.

⁴⁰ *Ches. R.O.*, EMC 1/4, sub 1794; Smith, *Meth. in Macclesfield*, 100; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 19.

⁴¹ The Frodsham area was not in the Chester circuit: Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 282; nor was it apparently in the Manchester circuit: inf. from E. A. Rose, Archivist of Manchester District of Meth. Ch.; so it was probably in the Liverpool circuit.

⁴² Chester City R.O., CR 55/7, sub 1788.

⁴³ Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 58–60; *T.L.C.A.S.* lxxviii. 28.

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Even the reorganization of 1770 proved inadequate to cope with the continued expansion of Methodism. Between 1771 and 1783 the membership of the societies in the four circuits increased from 2,909 to 4,443.⁴⁴ As a result in 1783 Burslem (Staffs.) was removed from Macclesfield and made the head of a new circuit including the Biddulph (Staffs.) area,⁴⁵ in 1786 the north-east of the county around Stockport was detached from the Manchester circuit to form the Stockport circuit,⁴⁶ and in 1792 the Northwich circuit was formed from the Chester and Liverpool circuits.⁴⁷ A plan to create a circuit for the Wirral peninsula out of Chester in 1788 failed as it did again in 1808–13 when a Neston circuit was contemplated,⁴⁸ for Dissent, as yet, remained weak in that part of the county. In 1798 Methodist circuits were divided for the first time for administrative purposes into districts, those in Cheshire being based on Chester and Manchester.⁴⁹

Methodism continued to grow in the county despite the schisms which occurred in the movement after the death of John Wesley. Wesleyan Methodists in the four Cheshire circuits of Chester, Macclesfield, Northwich, and Stockport numbered 3,465 in 1793, 3,994 in 1803 when a new circuit was formed from Macclesfield based on Congleton, and 6,123 in 1808 when the Nantwich circuit was formed from Congleton.⁵⁰

Thereafter, because of further schisms, its growth was less rapid, although new circuits were established at Altrincham in 1838, at Stockport in 1840, at Runcorn in 1848, and at Birkenhead in 1851.⁵¹ By then the connexion could boast in the county over 8,000 members, 188 places of worship, and an attendance on the evening of census Sunday of over 17,000, a few hundred more than the Church of England.⁵²

Of the Methodist schisms the most important in Cheshire, as in neighbouring Staffordshire,⁵³ were those which gave rise to the Methodist New Connexion and the Primitive Methodists, although the Wesleyan Methodist Association, founded in 1835–6 in Manchester,⁵⁴ was also strong. Alexander Kilham was expelled from the original Wesleyan Connexion in 1796,⁵⁵ and in 1797 support was received for the establishment of a new itinerancy from, among others, Methodists at Chester, Macclesfield, and Stockport. Initially wide circuits were formed, so that in 1797 one preacher served the Manchester, Stockport, and Macclesfield area and two others the Liverpool and Chester area, but by 1800 three circuits based on Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester had been firmly established and by 1808 they had twenty different societies and some 1,000 members. New Connexion growth over the next two decades was largely in the east of the county. In 1809 a new circuit was formed from the Manchester circuit at Stockport, and in 1814 another was created from it at Macclesfield.⁵⁶ By 1820 the three Cheshire-based circuits of Stockport, Macclesfield, and Chester, which included a number of societies in North Wales,⁵⁷ contained 25 societies and a membership of over 700. There had also been other Cheshire societies at Stalybridge since 1805 and Mottram since 1806 in the Ashton circuit, at

⁴⁴ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1771), 98; (1783), 165; for this paragraph, see T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 22–37.

⁴⁵ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1783), 162–3; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 19.

⁴⁶ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1786–7), 184, 197.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (1792–3), 252, 272; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 281.

⁴⁸ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1788), 203; (1789), 217; (1808), 13; (1809), 86; (1810), 154; (1813), 385; (1814), 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (1798), 402.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (1793), 272; (1803–4), 173, 182, 187, 236; (1808–9), 13, 24, 86.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* (1838), 296; (1839), 473; (1840), 30, 55; (1848), 30; (1849), 227; (1851), 596; (1852), 71.

⁵² *Ibid.* (1851), 626; P.O. *Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁵³ V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 126.

⁵⁴ *New Hist. Meth.* ed. Townsend, Workman, & Eayrs, i. 518–19; below.

⁵⁵ *New Hist. Meth.* i. 493.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* i. 494, 496; *Methodist New Connexion Minutes* (1797), 9–10; (1800), 7; (1808), 6; (1809), 5–6; (1814), 4–5.

⁵⁷ In 1848 the majority of these were separated to form the Hawarden circuit: *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1848), 4, 9.

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Altrincham in the Manchester circuit, and at Congleton in the Hanley circuit by 1825.⁵⁸ After 1825 New Connexion growth slowed⁵⁹ and efforts appear to have centred on the building of chapels and the training of local preachers.⁶⁰ Another new circuit was established at Stalybridge in 1837,⁶¹ but there were only 29 societies in the county by 1851 with a membership of about 1,500.⁶²

The first camp meeting held by Hugh Bourne had been on the Cheshire side of Mow Cop in 1807,⁶³ and Bourne and Clowes had been expelled by the Methodist conference in 1808 and 1810 respectively,⁶⁴ but the Primitive Methodists⁶⁵ made little early progress in Cheshire other than in the extreme east of the county on the Staffordshire border.⁶⁶ It was not until 1819 that the Tunstall circuit began to expand into Cheshire through the work of two missionaries, John Wedgwood and Sampson Turner, and a flourishing society was established at Macclesfield. By the end of 1819 other societies had been formed in the Burland area and in the north of the county at Preston Brook, Frodsham, Delamere, and Weaverham.⁶⁷ Initially all were in the Tunstall circuit, but in 1821, when the Connexion was divided into five districts, a new circuit was formed at Macclesfield,⁶⁸ where Hugh Bourne thought that 'many labourers have been raised up; and through their exertions and industry a good work is carrying on at a number of adjacent places'.⁶⁹ It did not remain the head of a circuit for long, however, for between 1823 and 1825 Cheshire was redivided between the Tunstall circuit and new circuits at Burland, Preston Brook, and Chester. By 1830 the three Cheshire-based circuits had a total membership of 1,140. Expansion in the next decades was very rapid. Further circuits were formed at Stockport in 1832, Macclesfield in 1833, at both Stalybridge and Congleton in 1838, and at Sandbach in 1840, by which time membership had risen to nearly four thousand.⁷⁰ By 1851 the Connexion could boast 135 places of worship in the county, a number exceeded only by the Church of England and the Wesleyans.⁷¹

The Wesleyan Methodist Association, established in Manchester in 1835–6 under the leadership of Dr. Samuel Warren,⁷² was at first comparatively strong in near-by Cheshire. The first Assembly in 1836 attracted representatives from Stockport, Hazel Grove, Northwich, Nantwich, and Sandbach,⁷³ and by 1840 there were five circuits in the county with nearly 1,600 members.⁷⁴ Thereafter support declined, although the Association had 50 places of worship in 1851,⁷⁵ and when the United Methodist Free Church was created in 1857 it still had nearly 1,200 members and five circuits in Cheshire.⁷⁶

The overall growth of Methodism in the county in its various Connexions during the century after Wesley's first regular trips to Cheshire had been extraordinary. From a handful of persecuted societies in the rural areas of the east, it had expanded by 1851 to occupy a central place in the religious life of the county. By then it had

⁵⁸ Ibid. (1820), 6; (1805), 7; (1806), 8; (1821), 5; (1825), 8.

⁵⁹ For an explanation, see Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 217–18.

⁶⁰ Between 1825 and 1830 the number of local preachers in the three Ches. circuits had risen from 50 to 63; by 1840 they numbered 90: *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1825), 6; (1830), 6; (1840), 7.

⁶¹ *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1837), 7.

⁶² Ibid. (1851), 8, 26–8; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 169–334; P.R.O., HO 129/452–60; *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁶³ J. Petty, *Hist. Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London, 1860), 15–18; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 52.

⁶⁴ Petty, *Hist. Prim. Meth.* 25, 33–4.

⁶⁵ As they were first called in 1812: *ibid.* 40–2.

⁶⁶ Ches. R.O., EMC 5/25/1.

⁶⁷ Petty, *Hist. Prim. Meth.* 75, 77, 81.

⁶⁸ *Primitive Methodist Minutes* (1819), 2; (1821), 2; Ches. R.O., EMC 5/25/1.

⁶⁹ Petty, *Hist. Prim. Meth.* 88–9.

⁷⁰ *Prim. Meth. Minutes* (1823), 5–6; (1824), 31; (1825), 10; (1830), 9–11; (1832), 3; (1833), 1; (1838), 3–4; (1840), 10–13.

⁷¹ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁷² *New Hist. Meth. i.* 518–19.

⁷³ *Wesleyan Methodist Assoc. Minutes* (1836), 6–7.

⁷⁴ Macclesfield, Nantwich, Northwich, Stockport, and Stalybridge: *ibid.* (1840), 58–9.

⁷⁵ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁷⁶ *Wesleyan Meth. Assoc. Minutes* (1857), 74–7; cf. *United Methodist Free Ch. Minutes* (1858), 64–7.

invalid clergy. In 1853 the missions at Congleton, Crewe, Bollington, Altrincham, and Hyde were all supported by grants from the diocesan fund,²⁸ and in 1879 £175 was spent by the bishop on the support of local missions.²⁹

Despite the financial difficulties of the new diocese the first 25 years of its history saw very rapid expansion and considerable church building. In 1876 Bishop Brown reported that the number of all churches, chapels and stations in the whole diocese had increased from 31 to 84 since his consecration. Most of the expansion had come in Cheshire. In 1851 there had been 18 established missions in the county, and by 1876 there were 33, and at least another ten mass stations, compared with only 11 missions in Shropshire. Expansion in that period largely took place in two areas of the county; on Merseyside where five new churches had been opened, and in central Cheshire where the labours of John Alcock, the priest at Crewe, bore fruit at Middlewich, Northwich, Sandbach, and Wilmslow. This energetic priest was also responsible for the establishment of a mission station at Whitchurch (Salop.) in 1853.³⁰ The growth in the number of missions and of the Catholic population of Cheshire meant that more and more priests were required, and their provision was one of Bishop Brown's major achievements. During his 30-year episcopate he ordained as many as 235 seculars to the priesthood,³¹ and although some of these were ordained on the strength of letters dimissory from other bishops,³² and many others also found employment outside the diocese, it is clear that there was a sharp rise in the numbers of priests active within it. The bishop himself thought that there were three times as many in 1876 as there had been in 1851.³³ The large sums laid out in fees for students at seminaries both at home and abroad during his episcopate,³⁴ and the close interest that he retained in individual students,³⁵ show that the increase was a direct result of Bishop Brown's own efforts. His plan, however, to open a seminary near Shrewsbury, which was mooted as early as 1855, came to nothing.³⁶

Catholicism continued to expand in Cheshire under Bishop Knight, Brown's successor. On his retirement in 1895 there were some 40 churches and mission stations in the county, and a further eight convents, five of which were on industrial Merseyside,³⁷ and at the turn of the century there were thought to be over 45,000 Catholics in Cheshire.³⁸ His episcopate saw further developments in diocesan organization. Apparently it was he who first regularly appointed an episcopal secretary,³⁹ for example, and at the end of his episcopate the Welsh counties of the diocese were separated to form part of the new Welsh Vicariate. Although the change created new financial problems and removed from the diocese the large congregation at Wrexham which the bishop had hoped to retain by making the Great Western line between Shrewsbury and Chester the dividing line between the dioceses, it left that of Shrewsbury a more manageable size.⁴⁰ During Bishop Knight's episcopate also a number of important diocesan charities and institutions were established. The largest was the Bishop Brown Memorial Industrial School at

²⁸ S.E.A., Libr., Acct. Bk. 1851-1872, pp. 5-8, 34-5.

²⁹ Ibid. Acct. Bk. 1871-1904, p. 44.

³⁰ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* II; *Cath. Dir.* (1851), 60-1; (1870), 200-3; (1880), 215-17; P.R.O., HO 129/453-9.

³¹ S.E.A., Libr., 'Liber Ordinum', 1.

³² Cf. *ibid.* sub 4 June 1928; letter of Byrne to Bp. Singleton, Jan. 1911.

³³ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* II.

³⁴ He had 18 students in 1854: S.E.A., Libr., Acct. Bk. 1851-72, pp. 13-14, 38-9, 48-9, 89-90, 97-102; correspondence concerning Ushaw Coll., 1868; Educ. papers of

Ushaw, Oscott., Douai, and Valladolid.

³⁵ S.E.A., Libr., papers concerning Shrews. student at Oscott.

³⁶ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* II, 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.* *passim*; *Cath. Dir.* (1880), 215-17; (1890), 240-2.

³⁸ *Cath. Annual and Almanac for Dioc. of Liverpool and Shrews.* (1898), 110-25; (1906), 87-93.

³⁹ S.E.A., Libr., secretarial notebook, 1883-1940.

⁴⁰ S.E.A., Libr., letters and papers on new Welsh Vicariate, 1893-5.

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Stockport, founded in 1885, which had an annual income of over £2,000. Others were the Shrewsbury Children's Protection and Rescue Society, and the St. Margaret's Refuge Home for Poor Women, both established in Birkenhead in 1888-9. A plan to found a boys' orphanage dedicated to St. Edmund at Bebington as a memorial to Bishop Knight which was first mooted in 1895 did not bear fruit until 1914, and then only after Bishop Allen had assigned the Lenten alms to the project for a number of years.⁴¹

Rural deans had been appointed and rural deaneries created under Bishop Brown; there were three in 1860 and five in 1870, of which three were in Cheshire,⁴² but it was apparently under Bishop Knight and his immediate successors that the form and frequency of visitations, in which rural deans played such a large part, were standardized. By 1906, if not earlier, a system of visitation had been established which was still in use with minor modifications in the 1970s. It began with the rural dean visiting his parishes and distributing visitation and parish account forms which had to be returned to the bishop one week before his visitation. The forms were very detailed, especially on financial matters, since the diocesan authorities still retained a close control over parish expenditure. Episcopal visitation itself was often more formal and ceremonial than inquisitorial, and was usually accompanied by confirmations. From the first decade of the century, visitations were biennial, but they took eighteen months to complete.⁴³ In the 1960s and 1970s Bishop Grasar undertook visitations triennially, and the work of collecting and examining the parish account forms was carried out by a full-time treasurer who was first appointed during his episcopate.⁴⁴ Between visitations the diocesan authorities were informed about the situation in the parishes through the Lenten returns of baptisms, marriages, confirmations, converts, and numbers at mass and at Catholic schools,⁴⁵ and from the 1950s surveyors' reports on the condition of the fabric of Catholic property in the diocese were received regularly from the parishes.⁴⁶

There had been over 9,000 Cheshire Catholics at mass on Census Sunday in 1851,⁴⁷ and the Catholic population of the county was thought to be 45,000 by the end of the 19th century. Growth was even more impressive in the 20th century, however, for there were over 100,000 Catholics in Cheshire in 1950, and over 185,000 in 1974.⁴⁸ The considerable increase in numbers since 1900, which was not shown by other denominations,⁴⁹ was unevenly spread throughout the county, being chiefly concentrated in the hinterland of Manchester and in the Wirral peninsula on Merseyside. In 1950, for example, over half of the Catholics of the county lived on Merseyside and a quarter near Manchester, and in 1974 there were 68,000 Catholics in the hinterland of Manchester, over 20,000 of whom lived on the new estates at Wythenshawe, and 67,000 on Merseyside.⁵⁰ The concentration of Catholics in these two areas was reflected in the structure of diocesan organization. In 1898 there had been four rural deaneries in Cheshire centred on Stockport, Chester, Birkenhead, and Seacombe. In 1940 there were seven, of which three were centred on Wirral churches at Birkenhead, Claughton, and Wallasey, and two on Stockport and Altrincham near Manchester, and in 1967 there were eleven of which eight were

⁴¹ S.E.A., Secretary's Room, Dioc. Char. Bk. 1889-1900; *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 17.

⁴² *Cath. Dir.* (1860), 95; (1870), 205.

⁴³ S.E.A., Attic Room, visit. and par. finance returns, 1906-68.

⁴⁴ Inf. from Fr. F. Pullen, episcopal secretary.

⁴⁵ S.E.A., Attic Room, vol. and bdles. of Lenten returns.

⁴⁶ S.E.A., Attic Room, visit. returns, 1955-9.

⁴⁷ *Eng. Caths.* 1850-1950, 49.

⁴⁸ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1950), 70-87; (1974), 42-86.

⁴⁹ Below, Protestant Nonconformity.

⁵⁰ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1950), 70-87; (1974), 42-86.

made up of churches in those two areas. Throughout those years there was only one rural deanery in Shropshire, although another had been created by 1974.⁵¹

Just as the growth of the Catholic population under Bishop Brown had required new churches and more priests, so the even more rapid expansion of the 20th century was accompanied by much new building, and by problems about the supply of clergy. There had been little church building in the diocese under Bishops Knight and Carroll, but under their successor, Bishop Allen (1897–1908), twelve new churches and ten new missions were opened in the diocese.⁵² Between 1900 and 1950 twenty-seven new missions or parishes were created in Cheshire, and between 1950 and 1974 another 36 were opened. Catholics were building in most towns, but they were especially busy in certain areas. New churches were opened in Chester, for example, in 1959, 1960, and 1965, on the Wythenshawe estates in 1935, 1953, 1955, 1960, 1971, and 1973, at Birkenhead, where there had been serious bomb damage during the Second World War,⁵³ in 1951, 1959, and 1965, and in the Liverpool overspill area of Runcorn New Town in 1956 and 1971. It was an indication of Catholic strength in the county after the Second World War that such projects as the new church at Ashton on Mersey which cost £67,000 in 1965, the new secondary school at Wallasey which cost £157,000 in 1966, and the church at Marple which cost £47,000 in 1972,⁵⁴ were completed with little financial difficulty.⁵⁵

The provision of adequate numbers of clergy for the new parishes was less easy. The number of seculars active in the diocese did increase as the century progressed from 67 in 1900 to 83 in 1928, 122 in 1945, 157 in 1967, and 167 in 1974,⁵⁶ but many were brought to the diocese from elsewhere, especially from Ireland, because there were not enough native ordinands. In 1897 there had been 50 Shrewsbury students for the priesthood,⁵⁷ at a time when the diocese contained only about 60 churches and missions,⁵⁸ while in 1974 there were only 64 candidates, of whom a mere 38 were nearing completion of their studies, for a diocese of some 160 churches and chapels.⁵⁹ The number of seculars ordained to the priesthood within the diocese increased in the first decades of the century from 15 in the 1890s to 33 in the 1920s, but thereafter declined, especially during the war years,⁶⁰ so that under half of the priests who began work in the diocese during the 1950s had been ordained within it. By contrast, the numbers of regulars ordained in the diocese increased very rapidly as the century progressed, although there was a slight decline during the war years, so that by the 1950s three times as many regulars were being ordained as seculars.⁶¹ That reflected the growing strength of the new orders within the diocese, and within Cheshire in particular. There had been Capuchin Friars at Chester since 1858, and Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Rock Ferry since 1862, but the newer orders were not established within the county until after the First World War. Salesians started a missionary college at Shrigley Park near Macclesfield in 1929, the Irish Christian Brothers opened St. Anselm's College in Birkenhead in 1931, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate opened another mission at Crewe in 1933, and the Salvatorians started work at Christleton Hall in 1934. After the Second World War new Irish Christian

⁵¹ *Cath. Annual and Almanac for Dioc. of Liverpool and Shrews.* (1898), 101; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1941), 53; (1967), 61, 63; (1974), 33–4.

⁵² *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 17.

⁵³ S.E.A., Secretary's Room, blitz diary of Fr. M. Curran.

⁵⁴ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 23, 47; (1974), 10–11, 42–86.

⁵⁵ Sch. bldg. was assisted by min. funds.

⁵⁶ *Cath. Dir.* (1900), 272; (1928), 248; (1945), 424; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 209; (1974), 87.

⁵⁷ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 17.

⁵⁸ *Cath. Dir.* (1900), 272.

⁵⁹ *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1974), 81.

⁶⁰ *Shrews. Centenary Rec.* 21.

⁶¹ S.E.A., Libr., 'Liber Ordinum', 1, 2; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 154–5.

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Brother schools were opened at Altrincham, Little Sutton, and Hooton, Friars Minor began work at Frodsham, the Sacred Heart Fathers opened a school at Malpas, and undertook the care of Baguley parish on the Wythenshawe estates, and the Salesians opened a retreat house in Bollington.

Congregations and orders of women also became well established in Cheshire after the First World War. There were ten convents in the county in 1900, five of which were run by the Sisters of the Holy Family. By 1945 other convents, schools, and homes run by women had been opened at Chester, Romiley, Bebington, Altrincham (three), Alderley Edge, and Birkenhead, and by 1974 there were 31 in the county, but only 36 in the diocese as a whole. The best represented congregations were the Sisters of the Holy Family and the various orders of the Sisters of Charity.⁶²

The decades after the Second World War also saw a great proliferation of diocesan societies and associations. The best supported societies were the Shrewsbury Secular Clergy fund started in the 1850s, the Shrewsbury Diocesan Children's Rescue Society established in 1889, and the various societies associated with the Lourdes diocesan pilgrimage. Diocesan branches of the Catholic Men's Society, the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of St. Columba, and the Serra International, an organization of laymen working to foster vocations to the priesthood, were also well supported.⁶³

⁶² *Shrews. Centenary Rec. passim*; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1967), 90–128, 161–3; (1974), 42–86, 97–101; *Cath. Dir.* (1945), 422; *Eng. Caths. 1850–1950*, 442–63.

⁶³ *Cath. Dir.* (1945), 423; *Dioc. of Shrews. Yr. Bk.* (1974), 139–55.

PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY

THE history of organized nonconformity in Cheshire begins with the Civil War and Interregnum. There were, it is true, puritan ministers in the county in quite large numbers from the 1570s, and puritan attitudes were becoming widespread amongst the laity, but complete and deliberate separatism was uncommon before 1640. That may have been because the ecclesiastical authorities, during Elizabeth I's reign at least, were favourably disposed towards puritan teaching which they saw as a way of winning people from the greater evil of popery. As a result exercises had been established in the diocese in 1584 with the full support of the bishop and the Privy Council with centres in Cheshire at Chester, Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Northwich. When that network crumbled in the early 1590s, exercises continued in the more puritan areas of the county, for example at Frodsham and Congleton, and municipal authorities at Chester, Congleton, and Nantwich continued to provide a platform for puritan preaching up to the Civil War.¹

The close connexion between puritanism and nonconformity in the county, however, is clearly shown by the distribution of puritan ministers and support and that of the early nonconformists. Puritanism was weak on the western side of the county—in the deanery of Malpas, on the Flintshire side of the Chester deanery, and in Wirral. Those were the areas, in fact, where Catholicism remained strongest.² Besides the municipalities of Chester and Nantwich, puritanism was most widespread in the centre and east of the county and especially in the countryside near Manchester.³ Significantly it was in just those areas that nonconformity was to find its first footings in the county and where it received its greatest support into comparatively modern times. The first Congregational church in Cheshire was at Dukinfield in the parish of Stockport,⁴ the first Baptist centre in the county at Hill Cliff in Grappenhall parish, both within 15 miles of Manchester; and early Quaker strength was at Mobberley, Frodsham, and Congleton. Moreover it was in the north-east of the county that John Wesley first preached. The returns of conventicles made in 1669,⁵ the licences for meeting-places granted under the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672,⁶ and the registrations of nonconformist places of worship over the long period 1689 to 1852,⁷ all show that dissent remained strongest in the north and east of the county until well into the 19th century,⁸ despite its rapid expansion following the Methodist revival. It was not, in fact, until the growth of industry and population on Merseyside in the later 19th century that nonconformity expanded in the Wirral peninsula, and even in 1970 a high proportion of nonconformist meetings were still situated in the east of the county.⁹

¹ R. C. Richardson, *Puritanism in NW. Eng.* 23–115, 138–9, 141; *Hist. Congleton*, ed. W. B. Stephens, 211.

² Above, Roman Catholicism.

³ Richardson, *Puritanism*, 7–9.

⁴ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.*, 340.

⁵ *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.*, ed. G. L. Turner, i. 168–73.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. 691–9. These figures do not include Quakers and some Particular Baptists who refused to take out licences.

⁷ Under the Act of Toleration, 1689, and the Places of Religious Worship Act, 1812: *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.* xxv. 214.

⁸ See table at end of chapter.

⁹ *Congreg. Yearbk.* (1970–1), 132–6; *Baptist Handbk.* (1970), 119–20; *Friends Bk. of Meetings* (1973); *Statistical Return of Methodist Ch., Department for Chapel Affairs*, 1970, i. 63–71; ii. 7–17; *Salvation Army Yearbk.* (1970), 54; *Christian Science Jnl.* (1970), 7; *General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Ch. Handbk.* (1970–2), 20–5.

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The reasons advanced for the particular distribution of puritan divines in the county before the Civil War seem equally applicable to the distribution of nonconformity after it.¹⁰ The proximity to the areas of nonconformist strength of Manchester, a town renowned for its religious radicalism and important nationally and locally as a trading centre, was clearly significant. It also seems likely that the local spread of nonconformity was encouraged by the trading routes passing from Manchester through north-east Cheshire to London, Bristol, and North Wales. The strength of nonconformity in the market towns of Chester, Congleton, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Nantwich, and Stockport which lay on these routes, which in later times John Wesley followed, supports that conclusion.¹¹ Perhaps most important, however, was the weakness of the Established Church in the area, for it was in the north and east of the county that especially large ecclesiastical parishes were to be found.¹² Moreover the scattered nature of settlement in the east of the county, for example in the Macclesfield forest area, had discouraged the building of Anglican chapels.¹³ The difficulty of attendance at the services of the Established Church, and the weakness of ecclesiastical discipline in these parishes which resulted, probably encouraged the growth of nonconformity.

With the collapse of the diocesan administration in the early stages of the Civil War there was a struggle in Cheshire, as elsewhere, for control of the parish churches between those who sought the establishment of a Presbyterian system of church government and those who wanted individual congregations to be allowed a large degree of independence. The considerable support given by the clergy of the county to the Solemn League and Covenant in the autumn of 1643 does not of itself indicate a preference for Presbyterianism, for it is known that there were Independents like Philip Nye amongst the signatories,¹⁴ and the earlier Cheshire petition to the Commons of 1641 had advocated that 'congregations' should have 'power to execute ecclesiastical censures within themselves'.¹⁵ By 1646, however, it is clear that Presbyterianism had found more support amongst the clergy, than Independency, for the latter apparently could boast only two or three churches in the county and the possibility of establishing two or three more, and only the society at Dukinfield under Samuel Eaton and Timothy Taylor was flourishing.¹⁶ It was Samuel Eaton who composed a petition against the establishment of Presbyterian government as proposed in the Ordinance of June 1646, but his support was apparently largely from the laity.

No Presbyterian system was established in Cheshire like that in neighbouring Lancashire at the time although an ordination was organized by John Ley, the preacher at Astbury, in August 1648, in accordance with the Directory, and Presbyterian ministers may have held a few meetings among themselves as well.¹⁷ The strength of Presbyterianism among the clergy, however, is shown by the *Cheshire Attestation to the Testimony of our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London* drawn up by Ley in 1648 and signed by 59 Cheshire ministers.¹⁸ Though they acknowledged that several of their Independent brethren were 'learned, godly, charitable, and kind to their Presbyterian brethren', they regarded Independency as

¹⁰ For what follows see Richardson, *Puritanism*, 9–17; Ag. *Hist. Rev. Supplement* (1970), 178–99; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, 295–315.

¹¹ Ag. *Hist. Eng. and Wales*, iv, ed. Joan Thirsk, pp. 562–3; *Jnl. of John Wesley*, ed. C. Curnock (1906–19), i. 446; ii. 175, 224, 234, 296, 299, 443–4, 520; iv. 34–6.

¹² J.C.A.S. liv. 29; *Life of Martindale*, 122.

¹³ Ag. *Hist. Rev. Supplement* (1970), 188–91.

¹⁴ F. J. Powicke, *Hist. Ches. Co. Union of Congreg. Ch.*, 2–3.

¹⁵ A. Gordon, *Ches. Classis Minutes, 1691–1745*, 100.

¹⁶ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. xxv, 340–3.

¹⁷ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 103–5; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. xxiv.

¹⁸ *Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews, appendix i.

'an error in itself', and 'if not the natural mother, yet . . . a tender nurse and patroness to heretical opinions'.¹⁹

In the autumn of 1653 a voluntary association was formed among these ministers and their churches, for 'mutual advice and strengthening one another'.²⁰ Their first organized meeting was at Knutsford in October.²¹ It acquired some appearance of Presbyterian usage by the admission in July 1655 of ruling elders among its members. Under the title of the 'Associated Ministers in Cheshire' it was recognized by the Manchester Presbyterian Classis in April 1656 as a body that could confer ordination. It did not survive the Restoration,²² however, when Presbyterian and Independent alike were forced from the parish churches of the country.

Outside the parish churches the more radical sects were also at work in Cheshire during the Interregnum. Aided by the pioneering work of John Wigan in Manchester, the Baptist cause spread with the Parliamentary army²³ down the Mersey and Weaver valleys through Warrington into Cheshire. By December 1651 a church was active near Warrington in the parish of Grappenhall attended by people from Reddish (Lancs.), Warrington, Whitley Green, Weaverham, Chester, and Liverpool. There was apparently no regular meeting-place at the time, but it was at Hill Cliff in Grappenhall parish in 1663 that a plot of ground was acquired for Baptist burial²⁴ and near it was built the mother church of early Cheshire Baptists.²⁵ There may have been other early churches at Nantwich, where Shrewsbury Baptists came to be baptized, and at Great Warford.²⁶

During the 1650s the Quakers also became established in the county, although their eccentric behaviour²⁷ sometimes lost them potential converts, as well as making them influential enemies. Most of the early missionary work was carried out by John Lawson, Richard Hubberthorne, and Richard Hickock. Of the three Hickock was the only native of the county, being from Chester, where he had the distinction in 1653 of being one of the first Quakers to suffer imprisonment and was released only through the intervention of the Protector's servant, Richard Minshull.²⁸ After release he left Chester for north Staffordshire where he preached successfully near Leek,²⁹ and in 1656 he was active in Ireland where he was imprisoned by Henry Cromwell with Elizabeth Morgan, another Quaker missionary from Chester.³⁰ He later returned to the city and was amongst the Quakers imprisoned there in 1660.³¹

In the autumn of 1653 through the efforts of Hubberthorne and Lawson the nucleus of a meeting was established at Malpas, and early in 1654 another sympathetic separatist community was contacted at Congleton.³² In Chester itself, however, the authorities dealt harshly with Quaker missionaries³³ and it was while Hubberthorne was actually in prison in the city that he met and convinced Thomas Yarwood, who in turn carried the new teaching to 'seekers' at Mobberley, afterwards the Morley Meeting. By the end of 1654 the many Quakers imprisoned at

¹⁹ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. xxvi.

²⁰ *Life of Martindale*, 112.

²¹ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

²² Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 106; *Life of Martindale*, 112-14, 117-18.

²³ W. T. Whitley, *Baptist Bibliog.* i (London, 1916), 72, 76, 90, 204; for importance of the army in spread of Baptist faith see A. C. Underwood, *Hist. Eng. Baptists*, 64.

²⁴ W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of NW. Eng.* (London, 1913), 41-6, 57.

²⁵ *Trans. Salop. Arch. Soc.* lix. 48; *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* v. 154-68; J. Kenworthy, *Hist. of Baptist Ch. at Hill Cliff*, 47-51.

²⁶ *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* ii. 237-8; vi. 25-36.

²⁷ F. Sanders, 'Quakers in Chester Under Protectorate', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiv. 36-68; W. C. Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 123-4.

²⁸ J. Besse, *Collection of Sufferings of Quakers*, i (London, 1753), 99.

²⁹ V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 117-18; Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 392.

³⁰ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 216; for Elizabeth Morgan see also *ibid.* 388-9.

³¹ Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings of Quakers* (1738), ii. 87.

³² Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 123-4; *Hist. Congleton*, 236.

³³ Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 99-102; *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiv. 36-68.

Chester city gaol, and the missionary activity of Hickcock, Yarwood, and Elizabeth Morgan indicate that a flourishing group of Quakers had been established there.³⁴ Of all the early Cheshire Quakers those in Chester were to face the severest persecution in the coming years.³⁵ By 1657 a further meeting had been established at the house of William Gandy at Frandley.³⁶

Quaker organization and influence developed quickly in the county. At the end of 1655 Hubberthorne publicly disputed with Martindale on Knutsford Heath, and other disputations took place at Shadow-Moss in Northenden parish and at Swettenham. Moreover Quaker pamphlets, apparently produced at Chester, Warrington, and Stafford, were circulating in the county.³⁷ In 1657 Cheshire Quakers contributed the large sum of £19 5s. to the 'service of truth abroad'³⁸ and in June of that year a General Meeting held by Fox at Frandley apparently attracted 3,000.³⁹ In 1658 and 1659 Cheshire representatives were present at further General Meetings at Skipton (Yorks. W.R.), and by 1659 a fund for the county was being kept at Chester.⁴⁰

It is difficult to estimate the strength of Quakerism in Cheshire by 1660 because its influence crossed parish boundaries. It is clear, however, that Friends outnumbered Baptists and that besides the concentrations of Quakers indicated by the nascent meetings at Chester, Frandley, Malpas, Morley, and Congleton, there were smaller groups elsewhere.⁴¹ In the autumn of 1660 some 112 Quakers were held in the county gaol and a further 10 were imprisoned in the city for refusing to take the oath of allegiance,⁴² but there is evidence that they were by no means the only Quakers in the county,⁴³ so their real numbers were greater.

When after the Restoration the ejected clergy petitioned for reinstatement in their livings or for other preferment,⁴⁴ at least 13 Cheshire ministers were removed in 1660 to make way for their sequestered predecessors. A further 29 ministers were ejected as a result of the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Of those dispossessed 9 eventually conformed,⁴⁵ but 17 others took out licences in 1672 as Presbyterian teachers (although 5 of them were for places outside the county) and 2 as Independent teachers.⁴⁶ William Cook, sometime curate of St. Michael's, Chester, was licensed in 1672 as a Presbyterian in one house and as an Independent in another but most ejected ministers as yet kept strictly to their pre-1660 allegiances.

Few ejected ministers were silenced altogether. Besides those who later conformed Wilson was still preaching in Chester in 1664; Thomas Harrison, the former vicar of St. Oswald's in Chester, is known to have been active in the city in 1665 and in Bromborough in 1669, and Adam Martindale became the chaplain of Lord Delamere at Dunham. For some, however, as for the Baptists and Quakers, the 1660s and 1670s were a time of persecution. William Cook was first imprisoned in 1663 by the bishop of Chester for preaching after ejection, as was Harrison, and both were harried during the 1660s for holding conventicles. The city and county

³⁴ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 125, 127.

³⁵ Below.

³⁶ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 331, 349; Quakers were active there in 1653-4: Friends' House Library, Meeting-House List sub Frandley.

³⁷ *Life of Martindale*, 115-17.

³⁸ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 324.

³⁹ *Short Jnl. and Itinerary Jnl. of George Fox*, ed. N. Penney, 51.

⁴⁰ Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 325-9.

⁴¹ At Pownall Fee, at Runcorn, and in Great Budworth parish: J.C.A.S. N.S. xiv. 77-84. Those at Pownall Fee joined

the Morley Meeting by 1665; Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings*, ii. 90-1.

⁴² Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings*, ii. 85-7; Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 102.

⁴³ Anon. *Abstract of Sufferings*, ii. 87; J.C.A.S. N.S. xiv. 36-68; Chester City R.O., MF/88; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34-5.

⁴⁴ V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 118.

⁴⁵ *Calamy Revised*, p. xii.

⁴⁶ For the dispossessed and their subsequent careers, see *ibid.* 71, 82, 91, 132, 135, 177, 179, 199, 224, 250, 251, 257, 300, 320, 343, 359, 404, 437, 536.

gaols in Chester saw the sufferings of many nonconformists during these years. That was largely because of the diligence of Sir Geoffrey Shakerley, a deputy lieutenant and governor of Chester castle. His letters to the Government reveal his concern about the situation in Chester and the surrounding countryside.⁴⁷ In 1665 he reported the activities of the Baptists and of Harrison's Independents in the city, arrested Harrison, Bullen, and Blackwell of Bidston, and took security for the behaviour of other nonconformist leaders at Chester, Frankby, Bidston, Irby, Laughton, Mollington, and Backford.⁴⁸ In 1667 he interfered in the election of the recorder of Chester to hinder the candidature of the Presbyterian, Ratcliffe,⁴⁹ and in 1669 he arrested John Garside, the leading Presbyterian in the county.⁵⁰ In 1670 he harried the flourishing Quaker community in the city.⁵¹ Other magistrates and to a lesser extent the diocesan authorities were also active in persecuting nonconformists in these years, especially after the passage of the second Conventicle Act in 1670.⁵²

It is not easy to assess the numerical strength of dissent between the Restoration and the passing of the Toleration Act because of the unreliability of the visitation returns on which such an assessment must largely be based, and because nonconformity was not contained within the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes.⁵³ It seems clear, however, that despite persecution it continued to grow. The incomplete presentments made in 1665⁵⁴ show Quakers in 4 parishes of the city of Chester, and in as many as 21 other parishes in the centre and west of the county, whilst Baptists were reported in 8 parishes.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Sheldon's inquiry of 1669 revealed at least 40 regular conventicles in Cheshire.⁵⁶ Another indication of the strength of nonconformity is given by the number of licences granted under the terms of the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, although they did not include the Quakers and probably some Particular Baptists who refused to take out licences.⁵⁷ The figures show the continuing support for Presbyterianism in the county, and that Independency had gained little during the Interregnum. During the year that the Declaration was in force 26 'teachers' were licensed in Cheshire: one as a Baptist, 6 as Independents including a successful preacher at Congleton,⁵⁸ and the remainder as Presbyterians. Only one minister, John Garside, a Presbyterian, had a general licence. He appears to have preached at Prestbury and Mottram in the east of the county.⁵⁹ Not all Nonconformist preachers were licensed, however, for prosecutions record the teaching of at least one other Baptist and three Presbyterians.⁶⁰ Besides licences for teachers 58 houses were licensed throughout the county, most of them for Presbyterian worship.⁶¹

After 1689 some persecution did continue in isolated places such as Congleton and Chester,⁶² but the Toleration Act eased the situation for nonconformists and enabled further expansion and consolidation. In July 1689 alone 32 places of nonconformist worship were registered at quarter sessions,⁶³ and in the next ten

⁴⁷ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1668–9, 378, 394, 396, 404, 533; 1670, 219, 222, 248–9, 261, 273, 313.

⁴⁸ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. xlv–xlvi.

⁴⁹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* 1667, 14, 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 1668–9, 354, 394.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 1670, 222, 261, 273.

⁵² Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 103–5; Chester City R.O., MF/88; QSF/79, ff. 91, 100–2, 106, 116, 136, 139, 143, 201, 235, 260, 265, 286, 293; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34; QJB 3/2, ff. 5, 9, 11. For later persecution see Besse, *Sufferings of Quakers*, i. 105–12; Chester City R.O., QSF/82, f. 270; SIG. 1; Ches. R.O., EDV 1/39–60; EFC 1/1/1.

⁵³ Cf. V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 120.

⁵⁴ No returns for deaneries of Nantwich, Middlewich, or Macclesfield.

⁵⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/34.

⁵⁶ The nature of the returns prevent exactitude: *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.* i. 168–73; ii. 691–9.

⁵⁷ *Trans. Salop. Arch. Soc.* lix. 49.

⁵⁸ *Hist. Congleton*, 229.

⁵⁹ *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.* ii. 691–8.

⁶⁰ Chester City R.O., QSF/79(2), ff. 100–1; QSF/82(5), f. 270; Ches. R.O., QJB 3/2, ff. 9, 11; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. xlvii, which lists others.

⁶¹ *Original Returns of Early Nonconf.* ii. 691.

⁶² W. C. Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 603; *Hist. Congleton*, 230.

⁶³ Chester City R.O., QSF/85, ff. 56, 73, 132; Ches. R.O., QDR, f. 1.

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years some 230 different premises were registered.⁶⁴ Although probably few were lasting, the growth of dissent which they reveal is supported by what is known, at least about the more radical sects. Cheshire Quakers, for example, reported to the London Yearly Meeting in 1689 that 'people of the world come in', and in 1690 that there had been 'an increase, one meeting revived, many convinced and things well'. Good reports continued to be received from the county until the 1710s.⁶⁵ Similarly the Baptists had increased from the two or three pre-1669 churches to 22 by 1713.⁶⁶

Of the Presbyterians and Congregationalists less is known and the evidence is contradictory. By 1689 there was little to distinguish the two, since persecution had sobered the intolerance shown by the would-be Presbyterians of 1648 and had led them to value, with the Independents, the autonomy of individual congregations.⁶⁷ It is often difficult, therefore, to distinguish between the two, although it does seem that, until divided by Unitarianism, Presbyterianism, supported amongst others by the leading divine and author, Matthew Henry,⁶⁸ remained the stronger in this county. It seems likely that most of the meetings registered after 1689 were Presbyterian or Congregational,⁶⁹ but by the end of the century they seem to have had few ministers in Cheshire. Only four of the ejected of 1660–2 were still alive in 1689,⁷⁰ and a review of all ministers by the managers of the London Common Fund in 1690–2 reported only 14, mostly Presbyterian, active in the county, although they do seem to have served a number of different congregations.⁷¹

There is little doubt of the extent of the expansion of dissent in Cheshire by the 1710s. Gastrell, the new bishop of Chester in 1714, compiled a report on his diocese which included information about dissenters and their congregations, and which, coupled with other evidence, shows how widespread nonconformity had become. It has proved possible to identify 50 congregations at this time, of which Gastrell noted 45.⁷² Of these the Presbyterians had 16, the Congregationalists 2,⁷³ and the Quakers 11,⁷⁴ while the Baptists apparently had 22 different meetings.⁷⁵ The leading nonconformist centres were Chester with four meetings⁷⁶ and dissenters, according to one contemporary, in excess of a thousand,⁷⁷ Nantwich with 157 Presbyterians, 109 Baptists, and 13 Quakers, Macclesfield with 100 Presbyterians and 80 Quakers, and Knutsford with a Presbyterian meeting and 74 dissenting families. Other important centres were Wybunbury, Sandbach, Astbury, Mottram, Frodsham, Rostherne,⁷⁸ and Dean Row. In 1718 a Presbyterian minister at Chester thought that the dissenters of Cheshire could make up about a quarter of the county's voters,⁷⁹ and the evidence of new meeting-houses built in the period provides a further indication of nonconformist strength.⁸⁰ Gastrell's report, however, by also listing the totals of families in each parish, shows that, despite this expansion, nonconformists were still only a small percentage of Cheshire's total population.⁸¹

Expansion brought greater sophistication to the organization of dissent in

⁶⁴ See table at end of chapter.

⁶⁵ Friends' Ho. Libr. Yearly Meeting Minutes, i. 209, 233, 252, 294, 328; iv. 20, 109.

⁶⁶ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*, 366.

⁶⁷ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 106–7, 117–20.

⁶⁸ For Henry see Chester City R.O., CR 151/86, p. 23; CR 151/88–99.

⁶⁹ Those at Chester were Chester City R.O., QSF/85, ff. 56, 73–4; QSF/87, ff. 2, 62; QSF/88, ff. 7, 32, 47.

⁷⁰ *Calamy Revised*, 117, 135, 251, 320; one had moved from Ches.: *ibid.* 117.

⁷¹ *Freedom after Ejection*, ed. A. Gordon, 15–17, 176; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. lvi–lvii.

⁷² Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 98–310.

⁷³ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* pp. lx–lxi, quoting Dr.

William's Libr., Evans MS. p. 13.

⁷⁴ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List; Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/2.

⁷⁵ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*, 367.

⁷⁶ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 98–124.

⁷⁷ Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. lxi.

⁷⁸ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 124–310.

⁷⁹ Dr. William's Libr., Evans MS. p. 13; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. lxi.

⁸⁰ Ches. Monthly Meeting: *Some Account of the Trust Property of Friends* (1855), 5–14, 21–3; *Jnl. Friends Hist. Soc.* li. 179–89; Whitley, *Baptists of NW*, 58, 61–2, 124; Chester City R.O., QSF/85, ff. 132, 204; QSF/92, f. 136; Ches. R.O., QDR, ff. 1–10.

⁸¹ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i, *passim*.

Cheshire. Quakerism illustrates this best.⁸² By 1676 Quakers were holding men's Particular Meetings, or meetings for worship, apparently weekly,⁸³ at ten centres in the county: Malpas, Congleton, Nantwich, Helsby or Newton by Frodsham, Chester, Morley, Middlewich, Norton, Frandley, and Stockport.⁸⁴ For organization, discipline, and administration those meetings had been divided in 1668 into three Monthly Meetings held at Morley, Nantwich, and Frandley.⁸⁵ They united as the Cheshire Quarterly Meeting, also begun in 1668.⁸⁶ Reports were regularly being sent by it to the Yearly Meeting in London by 1682.⁸⁷ A parallel organization of women's meetings had also been set up in the county by 1672,⁸⁸ against the opposition of some Friends,⁸⁹ but they remained much less important in Quaker administration. Quaker organization in Cheshire, although frequently rent by squabbles and rivalries in its early years,⁹⁰ provided the means of collecting considerable sums for Friends at home and abroad, enabled the regular recording of the details of their sufferings, provided, where necessary, relief for their poorest brethren, arranged and sanctioned Quaker marriages, and settled disputes amongst Quakers without recourse to the courts.⁹¹

Cheshire Baptists were not so thoroughly organized. The theology of Hill Cliff and its associated churches was Particular, and they remained fiercely autonomous.⁹² Nevertheless, the minute book of a Particular church at Hurst Farm in Stoke upon Tern parish (Salop.) shows that there was some degree of organization among the early Baptist churches of the region. Members were able to move from congregation to congregation, and meetings were held in Cheshire at Bostock, Hill Cliff, and Frodsham.⁹³ In 1689 a member of the Hill Cliff church travelled to London to represent his church at the Particular Baptist Assembly, and in 1721 Francis Turner of Warford joined his church in fellowship with an Association of Baptist churches centred on Rossendale (Lancs.). Other Particular churches in the north of the county may have joined the short-lived Association started in 1736 by David Crosley in the Mersey and Irwell valleys.⁹⁴ A further group of churches centred on Samuel Acton's flourishing congregation at Nantwich appears to have been General Baptist,⁹⁵ and although the Nantwich church itself was known to the General Assembly of General Baptists in 1701 and 1733,⁹⁶ it had no relations with that Assembly.⁹⁷ In the 1750s the views of John Johnson found support in Cheshire at High Legh, Toft, Hill Cliff, Bollington, Congleton, and Millington where he is known to have preached.⁹⁸

As far as the Presbyterians and Independents were concerned, there had been a meeting of the messengers of the Associated Churches of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire in 1674,⁹⁹ and some degree of organization is indicated by the ease with which Adam Martindale travelled through Cheshire, Lancashire, and Staffordshire

⁸² For Quaker organization see D. J. Steel, *Sources for Nonconf. Genealogy and Family Hist.* 609–25.

⁸³ As in Chester: Chester City R.O., MF/88; QSF/79, ff. 101, 136.

⁸⁴ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/1, f. 2; EFC 4/1/1, f. 1; EFC 2/1/1, sub Sept. 1678.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 2/1/1, f. 7; 5/1/1, ff. 1–5; 4/1/1, f. 1.

⁸⁶ Inf. from the Librarian, Friends Ho.; cf. *Jnl. Friends Hist. Soc.* ii. 61 n. which gives the year as 1667.

⁸⁷ Friends' Ho. Libr. Yearly Meeting Minutes, i. 116.

⁸⁸ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/4/1; EFC 2/3/1; EFC 4/2/1; EFC 5/2/1.

⁸⁹ Richard Smith, *The Light Unchangeable: and Truth and Good Order Justified against Error and Disorder* (London, 1677), 8 (Friends' Ho. Libr. Vol. of Tracts no. 35/29).

⁹⁰ Ibid. *passim*; Alexander Lawrence, *Answer to a Bk.*

Published by Richard Smith of . . . Chester (1677) (Friends' Ho. Libr. Tracts, box 45); Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/1.

⁹¹ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/1.

⁹² *Trans. Salop. Arch. Soc.* lix. 48.

⁹³ M. H. Ridgway, 'Anabaptists in Salop. and Ches. in the 18th century', 4 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 2, 4–6.

⁹⁴ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 58, 90–1, 94–5.

⁹⁵ Whitley, *Baptist Bibliog.* i, sub Samuel Acton; Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 121–2. The Nantwich ch. became Particular later and had relations with the Rossendale Assoc.: Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 135.

⁹⁶ *Minutes of General Assembly of General Baptist Ch. in Eng.* ed. W. T. Whitley, i. lviii.

⁹⁷ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 122.

⁹⁸ *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* iii. 55–60.

⁹⁹ *Calamy Revised*, 359.

visiting his co-religionists,¹ and by the preparation of a loyal address by various nonconformists of the county for James II on his visit to Chester in 1687.² A county-wide organization, however, was not established until the union of Presbyterian and Congregational ministers on the basis of the London 'Heads of Agreement' in 1691. The Cheshire Classis, as the meetings of this body of ministers came to be called, usually met twice a year at Knutsford, and although ministers from outside the county often attended, it remained, until united with the Lancashire Provincial Meeting in 1765, a predominantly Cheshire body.³ Besides prayers and a public sermon the meetings were devoted to the preparation and ordination of ministers, the administration of grants from the recently established London Fund, and of a Cheshire Fund, and the settlement of disputes.⁴ The minutes of the Classis do not survive after 1745, but by then its fortunes were declining.⁵

The episcopate of Gastrell (1714-25) appears to have been a high point for the older sects, for thereafter congregations dwindled and others drifted into Unitarianism. Registrations of places of nonconformist worship show the decline most graphically,⁶ as does the history of the individual sects during the next decades. Quaker meetings were discontinued at Eaton by Congleton and at Malpas by 1746, and others were in difficulties at Frandley and Middlewich.⁷ Dwindling membership among the Quakers led to a remodelling of their organization in the county on a smaller scale. In 1783 the Cheshire Quarterly Meeting was joined with that of Staffordshire to form the Staffordshire and Cheshire Quarterly Meeting,⁸ and in 1794 the Frandley and Nantwich Monthly Meetings united to form one Monthly Meeting for Preparative Meetings at Frandley, Chester, Newton, Sutton, Nantwich, and Middlewich.⁹ Only the Morley Monthly Meeting of the original organization of the county survived. That was partly because the membership of the Derbyshire Low Leighton Meeting had been transferred to it in 1739.¹⁰

By the mid 18th century some small Baptist country churches were fast declining. Warford was in the worst plight by 1759 with only two members, but some town churches were doing little better. The Chester cause shrank into obscurity after 1720, and at Nantwich the church in Barker Street was let to the Methodists in 1762 after two successive ministers had failed to maintain the congregation. The society at Hill Cliff also was temporarily closed in 1783 after protracted theological disputes.¹¹

The Presbyterians undoubtedly suffered most from the effects of Unitarianism, while Congregational churches tended to hold to Trinitarian doctrines. By the 1770s former Presbyterian churches at Allstock, Chester, Dean Row, Congleton, Dukinfield, Hale, Hyde, Knutsford, Macclesfield,¹² Nantwich, Sale, and Stockport had all become Unitarian although they often retained their former name. Only six churches survived as orthodox; at Chester, Hatherlow, Northwich, Partington, Stockport, and Tintwistle, and all were weak and struggling. Orthodox dissent in general had become very weak by 1770. Only one new chapel, at Hale, had been built since 1720, and that was to replace one at Ringway which had been seized by the diocesan authorities.¹³ Furthermore, the Cheshire Classis had long since ceased

¹ *Life of Martindale*, 202.

² Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.* p. li.

³ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 3, 106-7, 142-4.

⁴ *Ibid.* 122-3, 127-36; Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*.

⁵ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 91-2, 144-5.

⁶ See table.

⁷ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List *sub* Eaton, Malpas, Frandley, Middlewich; *Hist. Congleton*, 240.

⁸ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/3, *sub* 1783; V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 123-4.

⁹ Ches. R.O., EFC 5/1/6, f. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 3/1; 2/1/2.

¹¹ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 66, 122, 125, 154-5; Underwood, *Eng. Baptists*, 133-43.

¹² *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* x. 142-7.

¹³ Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.*, 13-15; S. H. Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 10-13; G. E. Evans, *Vestiges of Protestant Dissent*, 4, 44-5, 54-6, 65-6, 78-80, 97-9, 109-10, 124-5, 160-2, 178-80, 216-17, 231-3.

to exercise the influence it once possessed. Attendance at its meetings was declining by the 1740s. After 1745 it met only once a year, and was amalgamated with the Lancashire Provincial Meeting in 1765. By then it was a solely Unitarian body.¹⁴ By 1773 a minister in Chester could write: 'The dissenting interest in this county in general is in a very declining languishing state, and some of the congregations are likely to drop very soon. Congleton and Wheelock are at this time without ministers, and likely to be so, as there are very few to minister to.'¹⁵

This evidence of decline is strongly supported by the returns made for Bishop Porteous's primary visitation in 1778. Presbyterians, Independents, and Quakers all still maintained meeting-houses in Chester itself, but except for the Independents, 'the most modern sect' whose meeting-house was 'new and neat', were declining fast, and the same fate was predicted for the Independents. The Presbyterian meeting in the parish of Holy Trinity which Matthew Henry had taught had greatly diminished in numbers. The Baptist chapel at Brassey Green had such a small congregation that it seldom met, while most of the Baptists at Nantwich had conformed to the Church. Presbyterians, or Unitarians as they now were, had diminished sharply in the parishes of Congleton, Wilmslow, Great Budworth, Witton, Lymm, and Knutsford and Quaker support had shrunk at Little Leigh, Wilmslow, and Bosley.¹⁶ The optimism with which the Anglican clergy viewed this trend is only too clear from the returns, but they also indicate how widespread Methodism was becoming in the county. Methodist expansion, in fact, was the first indication of a dissenting revival, a revival which was to lead to dissenters rivalling Churchmen in the county by 1851.¹⁷

John Wesley had first preached in Cheshire in March 1738 when he visited Knutsford while returning south from Manchester,¹⁸ but it was not until 1745 that he made contact with a number of the religious societies that already existed in the county, and began a regular series of preaching trips to Cheshire.¹⁹ During the next three years he preached extensively in the east of the county laying the basis for Methodist societies at Roger Moss's house near Rode Hall, at Oldfield Brow near Altrincham, at Woodley near Stockport, at Shrigley Fold, at Booth Bank near the Manchester-Knutsford road in Rostherne parish, and at Northwich, Astbury, and Congleton.²⁰ The work of John Nelson, Christopher Hopper, and John Bennet, whose 'round' was merged with the York circuit covering Yorkshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire,²¹ and the visits of Wesley between 1748 and 1753 consolidated Methodism in the county,²² and by 1753 further societies had been established at Alraham,²³ Acton, Chester, Poole by Nantwich, and Macclesfield.²⁴

In its early years Methodism in Cheshire faced persecution. In January 1750 there was trouble at Altrincham, and in the summer of 1752 when a mob in Chester pulled down the Methodist preaching house in St. Martin's Ash the mayor refused to

¹⁴ Gordon, *Classis Minutes*, 88-92, 144-5; *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* iii(2), pp. 169-70.

¹⁵ Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.* 15.

¹⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, lii, pp. 26, 30-1; liii, pp. 5-6, 8, 10-11, 44, 49-50; liv, pp. 2, 6, 8-10.

¹⁷ Below.

¹⁸ *Wesley's Jnl.* i. 446.

¹⁹ For pre-Wesleyan religious meetings and preachers see F. F. Bretherton, *Early Methodism in Chester*, 1-10; Joan P. Alcock, *Methodism in Congleton* (Congleton, 1968), 1; B. Smith, *Methodism in Macclesfield* (London, 1875), 17-19; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii, 22-37.

²⁰ *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 175, 224, 234, 296, 299, 375 n.; Smith, *Meth. in Macclesfield*, 17-19.

²¹ Bennet had been active since he first met Wesley in 1742: *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 375 n.; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 26-8; *Proc. Wesley Hist. Soc.* xxvi(3), p. 33.

²² Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 8-9, 26-8, 269; Smith, *Meth. in Macclesfield*, 37-42; *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 374-6, 443-4, 520; iv. 14, 34-6, 56; *Letters of John Wesley*, ed. J. Telford (London, 1931), iii. 62-3, 96; *Proc. Wesley Hist. Soc.* xxvi(3), pp. 33-5.

²³ A society had flourished there before Methodist preaching: Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 2-3; E. R. Rose, 'Meth. in Ches. to 1800', T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 24.

²⁴ *Jnl. of Lancs. and Ches. Wesley Hist. Soc.* ii(4), p. 75; *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 14, 56; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 26-7.

restrain or punish them.²⁵ In 1753 another mob at Nantwich treated Wesley himself and his hearers very roughly and destroyed their chapel.²⁶ In the next decade sporadic persecution continued at Chester, Tattenhall, Northwich, Stockport, and Congleton,²⁷ but some societies benefited from the protection of local landowners. Richard Davenport of Calveley Hall near Alpraham, for example, protected Alpraham Methodists from rioters who wished to remove them from the parish,²⁸ and George Catton of Huntington Hall near Chester opened his house for preaching.²⁹ More damaging to Methodism in the county than persecution, however, were the infiltration of Moravian doctrines into some of the societies,³⁰ and John Bennet's break with Wesley in 1752. A strict Calvinist, he took with him the whole of the Stockport society, and until his death in 1759 troubled other groups by preaching against Wesley.³¹ The defection of James Scholfield in 1757 had similar results.³²

Despite such difficulties Methodism grew very rapidly in the county,³³ partly because its characteristic organization in circuits enabled it to reach societies too small to support their own minister or too isolated to share one with a neighbouring congregation.³⁴ Initially Cheshire had been in Bennet's York 'round', and, although the Conference minutes of 1749 speak of a Cheshire circuit,³⁵ it was probably not until the formation of the Manchester circuit in 1752 that Bennet's enormous area was finally split up. The Manchester circuit stretched from Bolton to Mow Cop and into North Wales and included all the early Cheshire societies.³⁶ As Methodism spread, however, it in turn proved too large and unmanageable, and in 1765 a circuit based on Chester was formed from it.³⁷ This arrangement was short-lived for in 1770, when the number of circuits in England was increased to fifty, Lancashire and Cheshire were divided further between circuits with their heads at Chester, Macclesfield, Liverpool, and Manchester.³⁸ These were initially known as Cheshire and Lancashire North and South, but in 1771 their names were changed to those of the circuit towns.³⁹ That based on Macclesfield included the Congleton and Alderley Edge areas,⁴⁰ that on Manchester the north-east of the county, and that on Liverpool apparently the Frodsham area,⁴¹ while the remainder of Cheshire lay in the Chester circuit.⁴² The first chapel in Cheshire to be built expressly for the Methodists was at Stockport in 1759, but the most important early Methodist chapel in the county was opened in Chester in 1765. It was built in the form of an octagon apparently at Wesley's suggestion and proved so successful that the Conference of 1770 recommended that the form should be used when other chapels were built, so that the Chester chapel became the forerunner of a number of other octagons.⁴³

²⁵ Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 32–5; *Wesley's Jnl.* iii. 36; *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 155–6; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 27.

²⁶ *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 56; *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 110.

²⁷ *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 371, 446, 522; v. 85; *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 155–6; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 9–11; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 27–8.

²⁸ *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 21.

²⁹ Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 28.

³⁰ T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 23.

³¹ *Wesley's Letters*, iii. 62–386; this may account for the slow growth in Stockport: *Wesley's Jnl.* iv. 372; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 28.

³² Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 41–2.

³³ *New Hist. Methodism*, ed. W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, & G. Eayrs, i. 369; R. Currie, *Methodism Divided*, 21 n.; *Methodist Conference Minutes (1749–1770)*, 40, 53, 71, 76, 84, 91. For what follows see T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 22–37.

³⁴ For this point see F. Tillyard, 'Distribution of Free Ch. in

Eng.' *Sociological Rev.* xxvii. 1–18.

³⁵ *Meth. Conf. Minutes (1749)*, 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.* (1766), 53; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 18–19; *Jnl. of Lancs. and Ches. Wesley Hist. Soc.* ii(4), p. 75; ii (6), p. 111.

³⁷ *Meth. Conf. Minutes (1766–7)*, 53, 71; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 71.

³⁸ *Meth. Conf. Minutes (1770–1)*, 91, 98.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 107–8.

⁴⁰ Ches. R.O., EMC 1/4, sub 1794; Smith, *Meth. in Macclesfield*, 100; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 19.

⁴¹ The Frodsham area was not in the Chester circuit: Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 282; nor was it apparently in the Manchester circuit: inf. from E. A. Rose, Archivist of Manchester District of Meth. Ch.; so it was probably in the Liverpool circuit.

⁴² Chester City R.O., CR 55/7, sub 1788.

⁴³ Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 58–60; T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 28.

Even the reorganization of 1770 proved inadequate to cope with the continued expansion of Methodism. Between 1771 and 1783 the membership of the societies in the four circuits increased from 2,909 to 4,443.⁴⁴ As a result in 1783 Burslem (Staffs.) was removed from Macclesfield and made the head of a new circuit including the Biddulph (Staffs.) area,⁴⁵ in 1786 the north-east of the county around Stockport was detached from the Manchester circuit to form the Stockport circuit,⁴⁶ and in 1792 the Northwich circuit was formed from the Chester and Liverpool circuits.⁴⁷ A plan to create a circuit for the Wirral peninsula out of Chester in 1788 failed as it did again in 1808–13 when a Neston circuit was contemplated,⁴⁸ for Dissent, as yet, remained weak in that part of the county. In 1798 Methodist circuits were divided for the first time for administrative purposes into districts, those in Cheshire being based on Chester and Manchester.⁴⁹

Methodism continued to grow in the county despite the schisms which occurred in the movement after the death of John Wesley. Wesleyan Methodists in the four Cheshire circuits of Chester, Macclesfield, Northwich, and Stockport numbered 3,465 in 1793, 3,994 in 1803 when a new circuit was formed from Macclesfield based on Congleton, and 6,123 in 1808 when the Nantwich circuit was formed from Congleton.⁵⁰

Thereafter, because of further schisms, its growth was less rapid, although new circuits were established at Altrincham in 1838, at Stockport in 1840, at Runcorn in 1848, and at Birkenhead in 1851.⁵¹ By then the connexion could boast in the county over 8,000 members, 188 places of worship, and an attendance on the evening of census Sunday of over 17,000, a few hundred more than the Church of England.⁵²

Of the Methodist schisms the most important in Cheshire, as in neighbouring Staffordshire,⁵³ were those which gave rise to the Methodist New Connexion and the Primitive Methodists, although the Wesleyan Methodist Association, founded in 1835–6 in Manchester,⁵⁴ was also strong. Alexander Kilham was expelled from the original Wesleyan Connexion in 1796,⁵⁵ and in 1797 support was received for the establishment of a new itinerancy from, among others, Methodists at Chester, Macclesfield, and Stockport. Initially wide circuits were formed, so that in 1797 one preacher served the Manchester, Stockport, and Macclesfield area and two others the Liverpool and Chester area, but by 1800 three circuits based on Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester had been firmly established and by 1808 they had twenty different societies and some 1,000 members. New Connexion growth over the next two decades was largely in the east of the county. In 1809 a new circuit was formed from the Manchester circuit at Stockport, and in 1814 another was created from it at Macclesfield.⁵⁶ By 1820 the three Cheshire-based circuits of Stockport, Macclesfield, and Chester, which included a number of societies in North Wales,⁵⁷ contained 25 societies and a membership of over 700. There had also been other Cheshire societies at Stalybridge since 1805 and Mottram since 1806 in the Ashton circuit, at

⁴⁴ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1771), 98; (1783), 165; for this paragraph, see T.L.C.A.S. lxxviii. 22–37.

⁴⁵ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1783), 162–3; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 19.

⁴⁶ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1786–7), 184, 197.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (1792–3), 252, 272; Bretherton, *Meth. in Chester*, 281.

⁴⁸ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1788), 203; (1789), 217; (1808), 13; (1809), 86; (1810), 154; (1813), 385; (1814), 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (1798), 402.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (1793), 272; (1803–4), 173, 182, 187, 236; (1808–9), 13, 24, 86.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* (1838), 296; (1839), 473; (1840), 30, 55; (1848), 30; (1849), 227; (1851), 596; (1852), 71.

⁵² *Ibid.* (1851), 626; P.O. *Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁵³ V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 126.

⁵⁴ *New Hist. Meth.* ed. Townsend, Workman, & Eayrs, i. 518–19; below.

⁵⁵ *New Hist. Meth.* i. 493.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* i. 494, 496; *Methodist New Connexion Minutes* (1797), 9–10; (1800), 7; (1808), 6; (1809), 5–6; (1814), 4–5.

⁵⁷ In 1848 the majority of these were separated to form the Hawarden circuit: *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1848), 4, 9.

Altrincham in the Manchester circuit, and at Congleton in the Hanley circuit by 1825.⁵⁸ After 1825 New Connexion growth slowed⁵⁹ and efforts appear to have centred on the building of chapels and the training of local preachers.⁶⁰ Another new circuit was established at Stalybridge in 1837,⁶¹ but there were only 29 societies in the county by 1851 with a membership of about 1,500.⁶²

The first camp meeting held by Hugh Bourne had been on the Cheshire side of Mow Cop in 1807,⁶³ and Bourne and Clowes had been expelled by the Methodist conference in 1808 and 1810 respectively,⁶⁴ but the Primitive Methodists⁶⁵ made little early progress in Cheshire other than in the extreme east of the county on the Staffordshire border.⁶⁶ It was not until 1819 that the Tunstall circuit began to expand into Cheshire through the work of two missionaries, John Wedgwood and Sampson Turner, and a flourishing society was established at Macclesfield. By the end of 1819 other societies had been formed in the Burland area and in the north of the county at Preston Brook, Frodsham, Delamere, and Weaverham.⁶⁷ Initially all were in the Tunstall circuit, but in 1821, when the Connexion was divided into five districts, a new circuit was formed at Macclesfield,⁶⁸ where Hugh Bourne thought that 'many labourers have been raised up; and through their exertions and industry a good work is carrying on at a number of adjacent places'.⁶⁹ It did not remain the head of a circuit for long, however, for between 1823 and 1825 Cheshire was redivided between the Tunstall circuit and new circuits at Burland, Preston Brook, and Chester. By 1830 the three Cheshire-based circuits had a total membership of 1,140. Expansion in the next decades was very rapid. Further circuits were formed at Stockport in 1832, Macclesfield in 1833, at both Stalybridge and Congleton in 1838, and at Sandbach in 1840, by which time membership had risen to nearly four thousand.⁷⁰ By 1851 the Connexion could boast 135 places of worship in the county, a number exceeded only by the Church of England and the Wesleyans.⁷¹

The Wesleyan Methodist Association, established in Manchester in 1835–6 under the leadership of Dr. Samuel Warren,⁷² was at first comparatively strong in near-by Cheshire. The first Assembly in 1836 attracted representatives from Stockport, Hazel Grove, Northwich, Nantwich, and Sandbach,⁷³ and by 1840 there were five circuits in the county with nearly 1,600 members.⁷⁴ Thereafter support declined, although the Association had 50 places of worship in 1851,⁷⁵ and when the United Methodist Free Church was created in 1857 it still had nearly 1,200 members and five circuits in Cheshire.⁷⁶

The overall growth of Methodism in the county in its various Connexions during the century after Wesley's first regular trips to Cheshire had been extraordinary. From a handful of persecuted societies in the rural areas of the east, it had expanded by 1851 to occupy a central place in the religious life of the county. By then it had

⁵⁸ Ibid. (1820), 6; (1805), 7; (1806), 8; (1821), 5; (1825), 8.

⁵⁹ For an explanation, see Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 217–18.

⁶⁰ Between 1825 and 1830 the number of local preachers in the three Ches. circuits had risen from 50 to 63; by 1840 they numbered 90: *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1825), 6; (1830), 6; (1840), 7.

⁶¹ *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1837), 7.

⁶² Ibid. (1851), 8, 26–8; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 169–334; P.R.O., HO 129/452–60; *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁶³ J. Petty, *Hist. Primitive Methodist Connexion* (London, 1860), 15–18; Alcock, *Meth. in Congleton*, 52.

⁶⁴ Petty, *Hist. Prim. Meth.* 25, 33–4.

⁶⁵ As they were first called in 1812: *ibid.* 40–2.

⁶⁶ Ches. R.O., EMC 5/25/1.

⁶⁷ Petty, *Hist. Prim. Meth.* 75, 77, 81.

⁶⁸ *Primitive Methodist Minutes* (1819), 2; (1821), 2; Ches. R.O., EMC 5/25/1.

⁶⁹ Petty, *Hist. Prim. Meth.* 88–9.

⁷⁰ *Prim. Meth. Minutes* (1823), 5–6; (1824), 31; (1825), 10; (1830), 9–11; (1832), 3; (1833), 1; (1838), 3–4; (1840), 10–13.

⁷¹ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁷² *New Hist. Meth. i.* 518–19.

⁷³ *Wesleyan Methodist Assoc. Minutes* (1836), 6–7.

⁷⁴ Macclesfield, Nantwich, Northwich, Stockport, and Stalybridge: *ibid.* (1840), 58–9.

⁷⁵ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

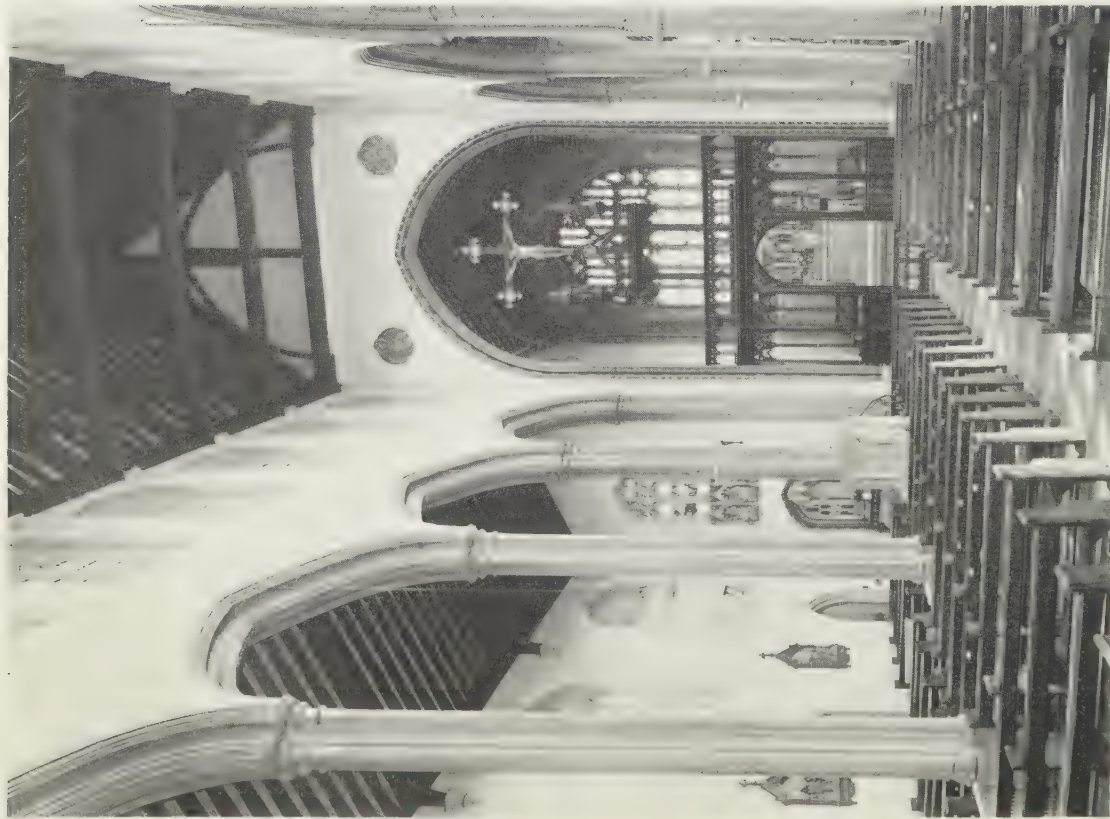
⁷⁶ *Wesleyan Meth. Assoc. Minutes* (1857), 74–7; cf. *United Methodist Free Ch. Minutes* (1858), 64–7.



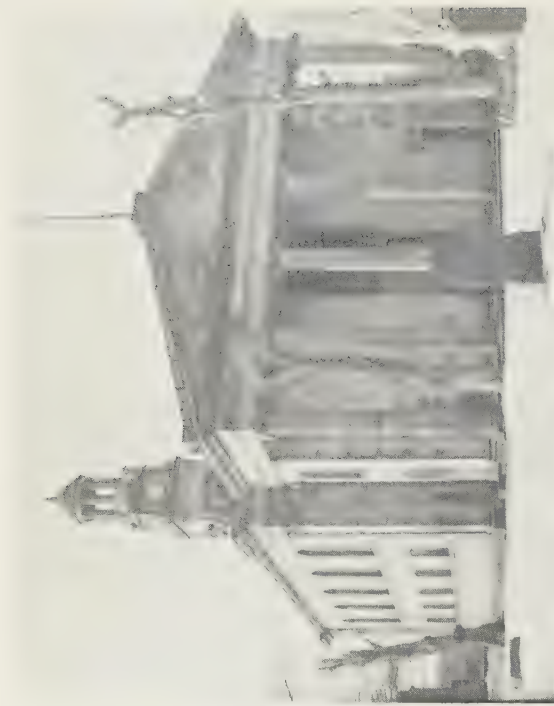
KING EDWARD STREET CHAPEL, MACCLESFIELD
built 1689; Unitarian since the early 18th century



ST. PETER'S CHURCH, CONGLETON
rebuilt 1740-2



ST. ALBAN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, MACCLESFIELD
built 1838-41



ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH, STOCKPORT, built 1822-5



ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH, HAZEL GROVE, NORBURY
built 1833-4

more than 400 places of worship, nearly twice as many as the Church of England,⁷⁷ divided into over 35 different circuits, with a membership probably exceeding 15,000.⁷⁸ Its successes were greatest in the rural areas of the county and in some of the new industrial centres where there were few Anglican churches or chapels, and where the older sects had as yet made little impression.⁷⁹

The religious revival illustrated by the rapid growth of Methodism was also experienced by some of the older sects. That was especially true of the Congregationalists, for whom the evangelists Jonathan Scott, Job Wilson, and Philip Oliver were active in the county from the last decades of the 18th century. Scott was responsible for the establishment or revival of Congregational churches at Nantwich, Chester, Knutsford, Congleton, and Macclesfield, and Wilson, after settling at Northwich in 1795, carried out regular preaching trips in the county,⁸⁰ and laid the basis for other churches at Tattenhall and Over. In Chester, the preaching of Philip Oliver was to lead to the foundation of churches at Great Boughton, Handbridge, and in Northgate Street.⁸¹

The revival of Congregational fortunes in the county made co-operation between individual churches easier and some form of association more attractive. In 1786 an Association of Congregational ministers and churches was formed for 'Lancashire and its vicinity', and by 1801 this included churches in Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire. It was limited at this date in Cheshire, however, to societies in the north-east of the county at Stockport, Tintwistle, Hatherlow, and Marple, and it was not until 1806 that the Cheshire Congregational Union was formed for 'the spread of the Gospel in the unevangelised parts of the county by means of itinerant preaching'.⁸² The founder members of the union were the churches at Stockport, Macclesfield, Congleton, Northwich, Middlewich, Nantwich, Chester, and Wrexham (Denb.), which were joined later by other churches at Tintwistle, Dukinfield, Gatley, and Knutsford. It soon included all the Congregational churches of the county.⁸³ The mixed fortunes of the Union in its early decades are well documented,⁸⁴ but it is clear that in providing itinerant preachers and some help with the building of churches, it played a large part in the rapid growth of Congregationalism in the county down to 1820 and its consolidation thereafter.⁸⁵

The period also saw the revival of Baptist fortunes in the county, although on a smaller scale. That was chiefly associated with the work of the New Connexion of General Baptists,⁸⁶ and the Fullerite branch of the Particular Baptists.⁸⁷ The old General Baptist congregations had virtually all become Unitarian,⁸⁸ and the strict Calvinism of those Particular churches that rejected Fullerism, the future Strict and Particular Baptists, militated against evangelism.⁸⁹ The New Connexion was responsible in Cheshire for the founding or revival of churches at Macclesfield, Tarporley, Stockport, Congleton, Runcorn, Wheelock Heath, and Stalybridge,⁹⁰ and

⁷⁷ P.O. Dir. Ches. (1857), 3.

⁷⁸ Meth. Conf. Minutes (1851), 626; Meth. New Connexion Minutes (1851), 8, 26-8; Prim. Meth. Minutes (1851), 26-8; Wesleyan Meth. Assoc. Minutes (1851), 50-3; P.O. Dir. Ches. (1857), 3; P.R.O., HO 129/453-60.

⁷⁹ For the increase of dissent in this period see table 1. Cf. K. S. Inglis, *Ch. and the Working Classes*, 85-100; *Jnl. Eccl. Hist.* xi. 80-6 for limitations of revival in the cities.

⁸⁰ Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.*, 16-20.

⁸¹ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 15-16.

⁸² Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.* 21-2, 22 n., 25; Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 19.

⁸³ Powicke, *Hist. Congreg. Ch.* 26, 77.

⁸⁴ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 19-25; Powicke, *Hist. Congreg.*

Ch. 26-36; Urwick, *Nonconf. in Ches.*, *passim*.

⁸⁵ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 20-5.

⁸⁶ Underwood, *Eng. Baptists*, 150-8; Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 157-61.

⁸⁷ Underwood, *Eng. Baptists*, 160-84.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 149; Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 160.

⁸⁹ There were only three in the county by 1840: Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 327, 332, 357. There were also Welsh Baptists at Bidston and Scotch Baptists at Chester: Underwood, *Eng. Baptists*, 188-92; P.R.O., HO 129/459/2; *Trans. Baptist Hist. Soc.* vii. 147.

⁹⁰ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 159-61, 333, 343, 355-7; P.R.O., HO 129/453-60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 169-334.

for the short lived Nantwich second church. Another church organized at Audlem in 1814 also joined the Connexion in 1844 after the withdrawal of the strict Calvinists from the congregation.⁹¹ Particular Baptist churches were established at Little Leigh, Lymm, and Dukinfield by 1820⁹² and at twelve other places in the county by 1850.⁹³

Despite expansion Baptist organization the county developed only slowly. When the Particular Baptist Lancashire and Cheshire Association was formed in 1838, only one Cheshire church, that at Stalybridge, was affiliated,⁹⁴ and although a few other churches joined in the next two decades, such as those at Stockport, Hill Cliff, Northwich, Birkenhead, and Crewe, most as yet stayed aloof.⁹⁵

The Unitarians also made some advances in these years on their twelve 18th-century gains from the Presbyterians. With the exception of the Birkenhead society established in 1851⁹⁶ they were all in the north-east of the county near Manchester where Unitarianism was strongest.⁹⁷ Co-operation amongst them was initially provided only by the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire which had been created in 1765 by the union of former Trinitarian assemblies of the two counties. At first the meetings were exclusively for ministers, but in 1826 lay representatives attended, and in 1856 the number of representatives for each church was fixed at four, the minister and three laymen. The assembly's role was purely consultative.⁹⁸ There were also many smaller groups such as the Rational Religionists,⁹⁹ the Moravians, and the Plymouth Brethren,¹ although only the Mormons with eleven churches in the county by 1850 became well established.²

Not all nonconformists prospered during this period, however, for Cheshire Quakers and Presbyterians³ gained little in the first decades of the 19th century. Quaker decline continued, and it was not until 1831 when a new meeting-house was built for the Morley Meeting that there were any signs of recovery.⁴ The further amalgamation of Quaker Monthly Meetings in the county reflected its continuing weakness. In 1831 all the Cheshire meetings, apart from that at Chester which was transferred to the Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting with its centre on Liverpool, were formed into the Cheshire Monthly Meeting,⁵ and in 1854, when the Cheshire and Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting was broken up, the Cheshire and Hardshaw West Monthly Meetings became constituent members of the new Lancashire and Cheshire Quarterly Meeting.⁶ That, however, was the nadir of Quaker fortunes for thereafter both Monthly Meetings expanded,⁷ and the reorganization of trust property in the county undertaken between 1848 and 1852⁸ brought a more efficient administration of Quaker assets.

In the 17th and 18th centuries nonconformity was largely associated with small market towns.⁹ In the 19th, however, the rise in population and the appeal of

⁹¹ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 160-1, 176, 326, 349.

⁹² Ibid. 339, 343, 356; J. Rippon, *Baptist Register*, ii. 3-4; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 317; P.R.O., HO 129/454/3; 129/456/1.

⁹³ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 325, 327, 331, 333-5, 337, 343, 350, 354, 357; P.R.O. HO 129/453-60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 271.

⁹⁴ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 183; it had been a member of a larger assoc. which included parts of Yorks. since 1820: *ibid.* p. ii.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp. ii, iii, 191-2, 198-200, 325-59.

⁹⁶ Evans, *Vestiges of Prot. Dissent*, 16-17.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 5, 78-80, 110-11, 235-6; P.R.O., HO 129/453-60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 169-334.

⁹⁸ *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* iii(2), pp. 169-70.

⁹⁹ At Stockport, Macclesfield, and Congleton: *Ches. R.O.*, EDA 13/2, bdle. 5; EDA 13/1, pp. 13-14.

¹ Moravians at Dukinfield and Wilmslow and Plymouth Brethren at Bollin Fee: P.R.O., HO 129/454/1; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 317.

² P.R.O., HO 129/453-60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 169-334; *Ches. R.O.*, QDR, f. 23; EDA 13/1, pp. 20, 23, 43, 45.

³ In 1850 there were only three English Presbyterian and two United Presbyterian churches in the county: P.R.O., HO 129/453-60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 169-334.

⁴ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List, *sub* Morley.

⁵ *Ches. R.O.*, EFC 1/1/4, *sub* 1831.

⁶ Ibid. EFC 7/1/3, pp. 7-8; EFC 1/41/3.

⁷ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List, *sub* Birkenhead, Liscard, Nantwich.

⁸ *Some Account of Trust Property of Friends* (1855), 5-23.

⁹ *Agric. Hist. Rev. Supplement* (1970), 185-8.

Primitive Methodism to the working classes and of Wesleyan Methodism and the older sects to the expanding middle classes¹⁰ encouraged its expansion in the new manufacturing areas and their residential satellites.¹¹ In Cheshire that occurred especially in the hinterland of Manchester, an area of traditional nonconformist strength, and, significantly, in the Wirral peninsula, where nonconformity had previously been weak. The Wesleyans had failed to establish circuits in Wirral in 1788 and 1808–13¹² and for the Congregationalists it remained a disappointing area as late as 1850,¹³ but between 1830 and 1850 other denominations were becoming firmly established in the peninsula. By 1851 there were 42 places of nonconformist worship in Wirral poor-law union of which only three were probably in use before 1830.¹⁴ Baptists were gaining in strength, especially in Birkenhead,¹⁵ Quakers were flourishing at Birkenhead and Liscard,¹⁶ and the Wesleyans were eventually able to establish circuits at Birkenhead in 1851 and at Seacombe in 1860.¹⁷ The Congregationalists began to make headway also. Between 1856 and 1875 three new churches increased their number in the peninsula to four, and between 1875 and 1906 a further five were established.¹⁸

In the hinterland of Manchester the spread of churches into the new suburban areas was even more marked. Congregational churches were established at Gatley, Sale, Bowdon, Wilmslow, and Runcorn, and the importance of the area was recognized in 1865 when Bowdon and Stockport were made the head of new districts of the Congregational Union.¹⁹ Methodist expansion in the area was even more impressive. Wesleyan circuits were set up at Altrincham in 1838, a second at Stockport in 1840, at Runcorn in 1848, and at Alderley Edge and Knutsford in 1864.²⁰ A New Connexion circuit was established at Stalybridge in 1837, and by 1850 the Primitive Methodists had circuits at Preston Brook, Stockport, and Stalybridge.²¹ The Baptists also expanded in that area with six new societies established there between 1850 and 1875.²²

Expansion of Dissent in the new urban areas enabled the denominations to tap the growing wealth of Manchester and Liverpool,²³ and the extent of chapel building in the middle decades of the century shows how effectively it was done. Apparently over half of the places of nonconformist worship in use in 1851 had been acquired or built after 1830,²⁴ and by 1847 the Cheshire Congregational Union had contributed to the building of fourteen chapels at a total cost of about £7,000. In the next decades the building of large and expensive chapels by only recently established Congregational churches, as at Rock Ferry, gives a further indication of increasing wealth. Congregational chapel building in the county reached its peak between 1856 and 1875 when a new building was opened nearly every year. That was in part the result of the foundation in 1868 of the Lancashire and Cheshire Chapel and School Building Society which contributed to the building of nearly every chapel. The climax was reached in 1870 when new premises were opened at Crewe, Middlewich, and Cheadle Hulme. Thereafter building work slowed, although Congregational seating in the county did increase by a third between 1875 and 1893.²⁵

¹⁰ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 30, 36; R. F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and Struggle of Working Classes 1850–1900*, 186–200, 219–41; for the social standing of the various sects see Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 131–40, 205–13.

¹¹ Inglis, *Ch. and Working Classes*, 85–6, 100–2.

¹² Above.

¹³ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 25.

¹⁴ P.R.O., HO 129/460.

¹⁵ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 327, 339, 349, 356.

¹⁶ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List *sub* Birkenhead, Liscard.

¹⁷ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1851), 626; (1860), 427.

¹⁸ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 36, 42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 24, 30, 35–6.

²⁰ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1864), 37.

²¹ *Prim. Meth. Minutes* (1850), 25–6.

²² Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 325–59.

²³ Inglis, *Ch. and Working Classes*, 85.

²⁴ P.R.O., HO 129/453–60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 196–334. For the limitations of the census returns for dating chapels see V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 132 n.

²⁵ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 23, 36–7, 40.

Other denominations were also building in the period. Eleven Baptist societies in the county, for example, built or acquired new premises between 1860 and 1880,²⁶ Quakers built at Birkenhead in 1856, at Hyde in 1872, at Morley in 1881, and at Frandley by 1882,²⁷ and the Unitarians opened new or restored chapels in eight places between 1860 and 1885.²⁸

Methodist expansion on this scale had started earlier. In 1814 the three Cheshire-based New Connexion circuits had only 6 chapels for 23 societies, but by 1820 the total had increased to 10 for 25 societies, and by 1840 to 27 for forty.²⁹ By 1850, after the separation of the Welsh societies from the Chester circuit,³⁰ the Connexion had 22 chapels for 27 societies in Cheshire, and although over the next three decades only 6 more new chapels were built, enlargements and rebuilding continued.³¹ The Primitive Methodists built and acquired property even more rapidly. In 1830 they had only 35 places of worship in the county, but by 1851 that had increased to 135, most of which were Connexionally owned chapels.³² Chapel building continued in the decades that followed, but it often caused financial difficulties among the Primitive Methodists whose membership included comparatively few wealthy laymen. The cost, for example, of the new Hunter Street chapel opened in Chester in 1899 was £5,740, although the sale of the old chapel in Commonhall Street only raised £212 for the new building. Despite donations, a bazaar, and a successful collection made at the opening, the debt was not finally cleared until 1921 and then only with the aid of Connexional funds.³³

The greatest chapel-builders in Cheshire, however, were the wealthy and socially established Wesleyans³⁴ who had few such difficulties. By 1851 they had acquired or built as many as 188 different places for worship in the county,³⁵ and by 1873 there were 219.³⁶ In the next decades the number of societies still worshipping without a chapel declined considerably as increasing membership and income enabled them to build their own. In 1873 158 Cheshire societies out of 219 had their own chapel, in 1891 this had risen to 187 out of 224, and by 1911 only 18 societies in the county were using other accommodation. Building was not evenly distributed through the county, however, for all the 60 societies in the wealthier Manchester district in 1911 had their own chapels, while in the rural areas around Macclesfield and near Chester preaching rooms remained more in use. Despite the slowing of membership growth in the decades after 1911, chapel-building continued, so that by the time of Methodist union in 1932 only 7 Wesleyan societies in the county were without a chapel.³⁷

The increased wealth of the nonconformist sects in Cheshire manifested itself in other ways. It helped to give the nonconformists greater interest and influence in public affairs. That was especially true of the Congregational church in Cheshire with its middle-class membership. 'Public Questions' first appeared in the Cheshire Union report in 1868, and in the thirty years after 1873 there were 55 resolutions of this type. The favourite issue was education, but there were also resolutions on disestablishment, temperance, and international affairs such as the Armenian

²⁶ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 325–59; for wealthy Baptists see *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 145–8.

²⁷ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List.

²⁸ Evans, *Vestiges of Prot. Dissent*, 5, 54–6, 61–2, 97–9, 110–11, 216–17, 228, 235–6.

²⁹ *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1814), 5; (1820), 6; (1830), 6; (1840), 7.

³⁰ *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1848), 9.

³¹ *Ibid.* (1850), 4, 8; (1880), 62–4.

³² P.R.O., HO 129/453–60; *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 196–334; *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

³³ Chester City R.O., CR 55/148, p. 4.

³⁴ Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 205–7.

³⁵ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

³⁶ *Returns of Accommodation in Wesleyan Methodist Chapels* (1875), 80.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 38–46; (1892), 49–59; (1912), 57–68; (1932), 64–77.

massacres and proposals for disarmament. In 1905 the Union resolved to promote at the next General Election the return of a government pledged to amend the licensing laws and promote Temperance. The resolution implied direct and unified support for the Liberal Party, a support which permeated the Union's attitude to education and disestablishment, and which is further shown by resolutions on the death of Bright and the retirement of Gladstone.³⁸ Individual ministers exerted considerable local influence. In Chester, for example, P. W. Darton, the minister of the Queen Street Congregational Church, and J. K. Montgomery, minister of the Unitarian chapel, were important members of the short-lived School Accommodation Committee.³⁹ Both also acted as secretaries of the Chester British Schools Association Committee of Managers, and were active between 1871 and 1875 in agitating, albeit unsuccessfully, to establish a school board in the city.⁴⁰

The Baptists also showed increasing interest in civil affairs.⁴¹ The 1840 circular letter of the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association included amongst the Association's lesser aims, that of 'attending to those civil questions which affect its interests', and in 1844 a committee was appointed to deal with such questions. That was, however, a passing phase, for it was not until the 1870s that there began a succession of resolutions which was to last well into the 20th century. The chief issues covered were religious equality, education, slavery, public morals, and international relations.⁴² Baptist churches in Lancashire and Cheshire also provided some degree of financial security for their members in sickness or old age, and arranged entertainments and holidays for them. The most important instance of Baptist social work in the area was during the cotton famine of 1861-3, although the moneys collected for aid were mostly distributed in Lancashire.⁴³

Quakers in the county showed concern about education and raised large sums for the Quaker school at Ackworth (Yorks). They also made a collection in 1846 'for the coloured people of the West Indies', and in the Cheshire and Staffordshire Quarterly Meeting had frequent discussions about the slave trade.⁴⁴ Use was made by Friends of the Quarterly and Monthly Meeting system to provide young Quakers with employment in Quaker households or businesses through a Registry of Young Men which was circulated. In this way, the Quaker firms of Stretch and Harlock, clothes traders of Nantwich, and Richard Hine and Son, corn dealers of Macclesfield, sought suitable assistants.⁴⁵

Methodists often showed concern about social issues,⁴⁶ and Wesley himself had organized collections for the poor,⁴⁷ but for most of the 19th century the Wesleys, at least, were conservative in their attitude to political and social questions and seldom dealt with them at their conferences or local meetings.⁴⁸ Interest in public affairs and in the social matters of the day was far stronger in the newer Methodist Connexions, whose own democratic traditions sometimes led them to the forefront of political reform. Joseph Harrison, a Methodist 'chaplain to the poor and needy', was instrumental in founding the Stockport Political Union Society for Human Happiness in 1818, and other Methodists were important members of 'political

³⁸ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 35, 41-3.

³⁹ Chester City R.O., CCB/113.

⁴⁰ Ibid. DES/5/1. Thanks are due to Miss A. M. Kennett for these references.

⁴¹ For Baptists and slavery see *Baptist Quarterly*, xx. 243-61.

⁴² Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 281-5.

⁴³ T.H.S.L.C. cxxiv. 141-3.

⁴⁴ Ches. R.O., EFC 1/1/5, pp. 4, 48, 53, 55.

⁴⁵ Ibid. EFC 1/48/6, 7, 8. For later Quaker attempts to create employment see J. M. Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand in Alleviating Unemployment* (London, 1947).

⁴⁶ Ches. R.O., EMC 5/9/1, sub 1850; Chester City R.O., CR 78/44.

⁴⁷ Wearmouth, *Meth. and Working Classes 1850-1900*, 143.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 210-12; Ches. R.O., EMC 5/1/1; EMC 5/9/1; EMC 2/11/1.

protestant' groups at Stalybridge, Macclesfield, and Gee Cross. Moreover the Methodist class system was used to good effect in several early working-class groups in Cheshire such as the branch of the National Association for the Protection of Labour founded at Macclesfield in 1829, and the early Chartist Associations founded at Nantwich and Stockport before 1841.⁴⁹ Later in the century Methodists became more overtly political, invariably on the side of Liberalism, and many became active in local government. James Jackson of Macclesfield, for example, a New Connexion Methodist, became a local councillor in 1835, a Justice of the Peace in 1859, and an alderman in 1868. He was a strong Liberal and thought that Liberalism 'offered the only means by which the community at large could become prosperous and free'. Other influential Methodists in Cheshire were Thomas Davis, a New Connexion minister at Stalybridge who resigned his ministry to devote himself to the political life and enfranchisement of the town,⁵⁰ and Joseph Stephens, a radical Wesleyan minister whose activities in the Ashton-under-Lyne circuit and at Stalybridge and Hyde brought him the antipathy of the Wesleyans and imprisonment at Chester.⁵¹

Besides an increasing interest and influence in civil affairs nonconformist sects in Cheshire, as elsewhere, created a number of semi-religious and social societies. The best known of these was the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon (P.S.A.), at which hymns were sung and addresses given on political themes and such issues as drink and gambling. The meetings were often very large. Attendance at the P.S.A. at the Crewe Congregational church in 1911 numbered 1,400 with a church membership of only 200. Other societies were also important. The Christian Endeavour Movement was brought to England from America by the Congregational minister at Crewe in 1886, and had soon spread throughout the country and into different denominations.⁵² One of the leaders of the Christian Endeavour Union in its early years had been a Baptist minister at Chester and Crewe.⁵³ The Band of Hope also attracted large attendances in the county.⁵⁴

The later 19th century saw the greatest expansion of nonconformity in Cheshire,⁵⁵ because of a rapid increase in local population, effective proselytizing, and an increasing social conscience among the different denominations.⁵⁶ The number of Congregational churches in the county, for example, rose from 66 to 81, in the forty years after 1851, and although not all of them belonged to the Cheshire Union,⁵⁷ the increase was accompanied by a development of administrative districts within it. Cheshire had first been divided into such districts in 1849 when there were two, North and South; but in 1865 they were increased to five and greater powers were delegated to them. Initially they were based on Chester, Nantwich (later Crewe), Bowdon, Macclesfield, and Stockport, but by 1875 Macclesfield and Stockport had been united, and, in recognition of the considerable growth in the peninsula, a Wirral district had been created.⁵⁸ The English Presbyterian church likewise expanded. Only four of their twenty 19th-century churches and eleven mission stations dated from before 1850,⁵⁹ and the establishment of a presbyterian system of

⁴⁹ R. F. Wearmouth, *Meth. and Working Class Movements of Eng. 1800-50*, 68-71, 123-4, 171-2.

⁵⁰ Wearmouth, *Meth. and Working Classes 1850-1900*, 220-3.

⁵¹ M. S. Edwards, *Joseph Rayner Stephens 1805-79* (Wesley Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Ches. Branch Occasional Publ. iii).

⁵² Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 43.

⁵³ Whitley, *Baptists of NW*. 293.

⁵⁴ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 44. For a list of other societies

see *ibid.* 42-3.

⁵⁵ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3; *Kelly's Dir. Ches.* (1902).

⁵⁶ For these reasons given as an explanation of Baptist expansion see *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 128-48.

⁵⁷ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3; *Congreg. Yearbk.* (1890), 284-5.

⁵⁸ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 24, 35-6.

⁵⁹ *P.R.O.*, HO 129/458/1; 129/459/2; 129/460/5; *Presbyterian Ch. of Eng. Handbk.* (1899-1900), 60-70, 100-6.

government in the county based on two presbyteries, at Liverpool and Manchester, was not completed until after 1850.⁶⁰

The greatest development in co-operation between individual congregations and ministers in that period took place in the Unitarian and Baptist churches. Unitarian expansion from 14 churches in 1851⁶¹ to 21 in 1895⁶² appears to have resulted partly from the creation of four Unitarian bodies which greatly extended the work of co-operation hitherto undertaken solely by the Provincial Assembly in the direction of missionary activity. The first and most important of those bodies as far as Cheshire was concerned was the East Cheshire Missionary Association,⁶³ founded at Dukinfield in 1859, a few months before the Provincial Assembly officially sponsored the creation of such missionary bodies.⁶⁴ The purpose of the Association was 'to afford mutual assistance to the Churches composing it, either in carrying on their own services, or in conducting missionary operations'. Despite financial difficulties it was able to set up new churches at Flowery Field and Stalybridge, and support successful missionary activity at Middlewich, Sandbach, Northwich, and Bollington by the end of the century, although thereafter it was limited to supporting individual churches without a settled minister.⁶⁵ In 1970 it had 21 member churches of which 14 were in Cheshire.⁶⁶ Two other missionary bodies resulted directly from the sponsorship of the Provincial Assembly in 1859-60. They were the Manchester District Unitarian Association, founded in 1859, with member churches in Cheshire at Hale, Sale, and Altrincham, and the Liverpool District Missionary Association, founded in 1860, with churches at Birkenhead and Chester.⁶⁷ A South Cheshire and District Association was founded in 1899 by congregations in the area for further local missionary work. It included a number of churches in other Associations.⁶⁸

Baptist churches in north-west England exhibited an outstanding rate of growth in the later 19th century, and by 1888 the Lancashire and Cheshire Association had become the largest in England outside London. The very growth in size and influence of the Association was not liked by some churches in the area, however, for they feared that their autonomy was threatened by it, and in 1860 a group of the most Calvinist churches broke with the Association to form the North Western Association of Baptist Churches. The only Cheshire church in the Association was one at Latchford which had emerged from a split at Hill Cliff.⁶⁹ The North Western Association's life was short and largely unfruitful, however, and it rejoined the larger Association in 1876.⁷⁰ The latter had shown considerable support for the Baptist Union, and in 1877 its committee recommended a resolution commending the work and aims of the Union to its churches. Nevertheless it was not until 1891 with the creation of the modern Baptist Union that the New Connexion churches joined the Association, and most of the remaining Particular churches outside it came in.⁷¹ By 1900 there were 40 Baptist churches in the county, of which 31 were members of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, and 21 members of the Baptist Union. Welsh

⁶⁰ *Presbyterian Ch. of Eng. Handbk.* (1890-1), 28-37, 67-76.

⁶¹ *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁶² *Essex Hall Yearbk.* (1895), 16-28.

⁶³ So called 1859-64. In 1864 it was renamed the East Ches. Christian Union for Missionary Purposes, and in 1952 it became the East Ches. Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Ch.: *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* xii. 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 10; *Essex Hall Yearbk.* (1900), 43.

⁶⁵ *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* xii. 12-24.

⁶⁶ *General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Ch. Handbk.* (1967-70), 20.

⁶⁷ *Trans. Unitarian Hist. Soc.* xii. 10; *Essex Hall Yearbk.* (1895), 16-28, 43.

⁶⁸ *General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Ch. Handbk.* (1967-70), 25; *Essex Hall Yearbk.* (1910), 87.

⁶⁹ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 128-9, 141-2.

⁷⁰ J. H. Lea, 'The NW. Association of Baptist Ch.', *Baptist Quarterly*, xxiii(2), pp. 77-88.

⁷¹ Whitley, *Baptists of NW.* 237-42, 287-8, 290.

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Baptist churches at Chester, Birkenhead, and Seacombe were members of the Denbigh, Flint, and Merioneth Association which had been created in 1845.⁷²

The period of rapid nonconformist expansion also saw the arrival of new sects in Cheshire. The most important of them was the Salvation Army. William Booth had begun his revivalist work in 1861, and, although the first *War Cry* was not issued until 1879,⁷³ the Army had made considerable advances in their North West Province by the end of the century, especially in the poorer industrial areas.⁷⁴ By 1908 there were 22 corps in Cheshire in the Liverpool and South Manchester Divisions, and the Army had become especially strong in the Wirral peninsula on Merseyside, and in the industrial areas of Stockport and Stalybridge.⁷⁵ By then there was a Swedenborgian church at Stockport with 95 members,⁷⁶ and Christian Scientists were meeting in Chester.⁷⁷

The rapid expansion of the later 19th century, which had been a feature of Cheshire nonconformist history as well as that of other counties, had ended by the First World War,⁷⁸ which further changed the administration of the sects. The newer Methodist Connexions planned to unite. Oecumenical pressures had become especially strong amongst them, since their schisms had always been on organizational rather than theological grounds, and connexional discipline was weakening.⁷⁹ Their first successful union, that of 1857 which resulted in the United Methodist Free Church, had followed in Cheshire a period of stagnation amongst its constituent members,⁸⁰ and the creation of the United Methodist Church in 1907 also followed a period in which membership growth had declined in the county.⁸¹ While the union of 1857 made little organizational difference because of the scarcity of Methodist Reform Societies there, that of 1907 made a noticeable difference to Methodism in the county. It brought together New Connexion circuits at Chester, Macclesfield, Stalybridge, Stockport, and Crewe with United Methodist Free Church circuits at Birkenhead, Crewe, Frodsham, Nantwich, Northwich, Runcorn, Winsford and Sandbach, Macclesfield, Poynton, and Stalybridge,⁸² and resulted in a new connexion slightly nearer in size to the Wesleyans. The third group in the United Methodist Church, the Bible Christians, were not represented in Cheshire.⁸³ By 1920 it had achieved some consolidation in the county by the elimination of overlapping circuits.⁸⁴

Methodism continued to expand in Cheshire until the 1930s, although not proportionately to the growth of population. The Wesleyans opened eleven new chapels between 1912 and 1931,⁸⁵ and their membership rose from 12,700 in 1900 to 15,350 in 1932.⁸⁶ The other Connexions also grew,⁸⁷ so that by 1933 there were about 30,000 Methodists and 430 Methodist societies in the county.⁸⁸ The creation of the Methodist Church in 1932 was strongly opposed in some parts of Cheshire.⁸⁹

⁷² *Baptist Handbk.* (1900), 35–6.

⁷³ *Salvation Army Yearbk.* (1920), 73.

⁷⁴ Inglis, *Ch. and Working Classes*, 92, 95, 97–8.

⁷⁵ *Salvation Army Yearbk.* (1908), 22.

⁷⁶ *Minutes of General Conference of the New Ch.* (1905), 116–17.

⁷⁷ *First Ch. of Christ, Scientist, Chester* (Dedication Address, 1955).

⁷⁸ *Agric. Hist. Rev. Supplement* (1970), 178.

⁷⁹ Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 117–31, 173–4, 217–39.

⁸⁰ *Wesleyan Meth. Assoc. Minutes* (1857), 74–7; *United Meth. Free Ch. Minutes* (1857), 64–7; *P.O. Dir. Ches.* (1857), 3.

⁸¹ *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1890), 60–3; *United Meth. Free Ch. Minutes* (1890), 54, 56, 62; *United Meth. Ch.*

Minutes (1907), 115, 118, 120.

⁸² *Meth. New Connexion Minutes* (1907), 124–7; *United Meth. Free Ch. Minutes* (1907), 61–3.

⁸³ *United Meth. Ch. Minutes* (1907), 115, 118, 120.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* (1919), 149, 152, 154.

⁸⁵ *Returns of Accommodation in Wesleyan Chapels* (1932), 134–5.

⁸⁶ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1900), 528–30; (1932), 270–2.

⁸⁷ *Prim. Meth. Minutes* (1900), 108–10; (1932), 57–9; *United Meth. Ch. Minutes* (1907), 115–20; (1932), 102–7; *Independent Methodist Yearbk.* (1914–15), 64–73; (1930–1), 62–71.

⁸⁸ *Meth. Conf. Minutes* (1933), 471, 480–2, 491; *Independent Meth. Yearbk.* (1930–1), 62–71.

⁸⁹ Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 203–4, 259, 288.

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It was followed by slow decline. Nevertheless, despite the loss of chapels because of bombing during the Second World War,⁹⁰ there were still over 400 societies in the county in 1960.⁹¹ Circuits were extensively consolidated in the decades after 1932, although the process was slow and old Connexional loyalties remained strong.⁹² The four former Crewe circuits, for example, were not finally united until 1964, and single Nantwich and Congleton circuits were not created until 1965 and 1969 respectively.⁹³ In most of the county, however, consolidation was complete by 1960 when there were 39 circuits in comparison with the 60 of 1932.⁹⁴ The loss of a further 10 circuits by 1970 was probably due as much to declining membership as to organizational reform, for the number of societies declined very rapidly after 1960. In 1970 there were only about 290 divided between 29 circuits in the Chester and Stoke, Manchester, and Liverpool Districts,⁹⁵ whose chapels provided a mere 60,000 seats, nearly 15,000 fewer than the Wesleyan Methodist Church alone had provided in 1931.⁹⁶

The Congregational Church in Cheshire began to decline earlier. Although membership continued to rise until 1915, an indication of decline was the poor response to the centenary fund launched by the Cheshire Union in 1916 to provide for church extension and to help needy ministers.⁹⁷ From 1915 the Union's membership shrank rapidly despite slight recoveries in the early 1920s and early 1930s, from 9,849 in 1915 to 8,254 in 1939 and about 7,000 by the mid 1950s.⁹⁸ By 1970 its membership had fallen as low as 6,500, and 14 of the 75 churches in the county had no minister, while a further 14 were only served by a supplied one.⁹⁹ The overtures to the Presbyterian Church of England which eventually resulted in the creation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 may have been partly a result of the decline, which was experienced throughout the Congregational Church.¹ Although a minority of individual churches opposed the union, it was supported by the Cheshire Congregational Union² and anticipated at Sale where joint services had been held for some years before 1972.³ In Cheshire it brought together Congregational and Presbyterian churches with nearly equal membership, for the Presbyterian Church of England had not declined as much as its partners. It had established new churches as late as 1943 at Bebington, 1961 at Cavendish in Birkenhead, and 1963 at Handforth, and its communicants numbered 4,760 in 1970, only a hundred fewer than in 1900.⁴

Baptists in Cheshire declined by a quarter between 1900 and 1970,⁵ by which time two fellowships had been formed in the county to provide ministerial support for some of the weakest churches. They aided the Mid Cheshire Group which contained the churches of Anderton, Little Leigh, Milton, and Tarporley, and the North Cheshire Fellowship which contained those of Ashton-under-Lyne (Lancs.), Hyde, Dukinfield, Stalybridge, and Openshaw (Lancs.). In 1970 31 of the 36 Baptist

⁹⁰ G. S. Spinks, *Religion in Brit. since 1900*, 217.

⁹¹ *Statistical Return of Meth. Ch., Dept. of Chapel Affairs*, 1960, i. 70-80; ii. 3-13.

⁹² Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 195-200, 299-303.

⁹³ Ches. R.O., EMC 5/1/6, p. 78; EMC 2/1/6, sub June 1965; EMC 3/14/5, pp. 157-8.

⁹⁴ *Statistical Return of Meth. Ch., Dept. of Chapel Affairs*, 1960, i. 70-80; ii. 3-13.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 1970, i. 63-71; ii. 7-17.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*; *Returns of Accommodation in Wesleyan Chapels* (1932), 64-77.

⁹⁷ Mayor, *Ches. Congreg.* 50-2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 50-1, 74-5.

⁹⁹ *Congreg. Yearbk.* (1970), 132-6.

¹ For the connexion between oecumenicalism and declining membership see Cowie, *Meth. Divided*, 85-103, 109-10, 306.

² *Congreg. Yearbk.* (1972), 36.

³ *Presbyterian Ch. of Eng. Handbk.* (1970-1), 242.

⁴ *Ibid.* (1899-1900), 60-70, 100-6; (1970-1), 68-83, 119-29.

⁵ *Baptist Handbk.* (1900), 35-6; (1970), 119-20.

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churches in the county were members of the Baptist Union, and only the church at Great Warford remained outside a local association.⁶

The fortunes of Cheshire Quakers during the 20th century were mixed.⁷ Meetings were closed at Macclesfield in 1895, at Hyde in 1904, at Hoylake in 1912, and at Nantwich in 1922, but thereafter, perhaps owing to the success of Quaker social work during the period between the World Wars,⁸ new meetings, some of them short-lived, were opened at Runcorn in 1920, at Disley in 1927, at Cheadle Hulme in 1935, at Heswall in 1939, at Marple in 1940, at West Kirby in 1940, and at Congleton in 1942.⁹ In 1958 there were 14 meetings in the county: 7 in the Cheshire Monthly Meeting, 3 in the Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting, and 4 in the Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting.¹⁰ In 1961 these totalled nearly 600 members.¹¹ That expansion created administrative difficulties for the Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting, divided as it was by the Mersey. The creation of the Wirral and North Wales Monthly Meeting in 1964 removed them.¹² In 1967 the Lancashire and Cheshire Quarterly Meeting was renamed the Lancashire and Cheshire General Meeting. Thereafter it became predominantly social, while its former administrative duties were undertaken by the Monthly Meetings.¹³ By 1973 there had been some retrenchment and meetings had been closed at Wallasey, Little Leigh, and Ashton on Mersey.¹⁴

Some of the newest sects continued to expand during the 20th century. During the Second World War there were Christian Science centres at Birkenhead, Chester,

NONCONFORMIST PLACES OF WORSHIP 1689-1852

	Malpas Deanery	Wirral Deanery	Chester Deanery	Middlewich Deanery	Nantwich Deanery	Town	Chester City	Macclesfield Deanery	Frodsham Deanery	TOTALS
1689-1698	2	24	19	28	21	21	13	43	60	231
1699-1708	4	5	8	18	10	4	30	40	46	165
1709-1718	3	6	3	8	15	6	32	29	35	137
1719-1728	4	1	2	9	5	4	11	14	33	83
1729-1738	1	0	2	2	2	2	4	4	17	34
1739-1748	0	0	1	3	1	1	0	9	3	18
1749-1758	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	7	5	23
1759-1768	2	2	3	4	2	1	2	4	9	29
1769-1778	0	0	4	1	0	0	3	2	4	14
1779-1788	3	0	6	4	1	0	0	14	13	41
1789-1798	5	1	5	7	4	0	2	23	10	57
1799-1808	2	2	5	2	1	1	3	4	6	26
1809-1818	16	14	11	30	31	3	3	24	43	175
1819-1828	24	20	20	30	33	4	9	49	54	243
1829-1838	15	9	18	14	47	2	4	35	28	172
1839-1848	8	13	7	14	16	3	3	31	15	110
1849-1852	6	5	1	5	7	0	1	9	6	40
TOTALS	98	103	116	181	198	53	121	341	387	1,598

Sources:

Ches. R.O., QDR, register; QDR, returns to Clerk of Peace; EDA 2/6; EDA 13/1-2; Chester City R.O., QSF/85-103; G.R.O., Worship Returns, Ches., nos. 1-679; dioc. of Chester, nos. 1-237, 1589-1595, 1619-1682, 1708-1716; Chester archdeac., nil return; Chester boro., nil return. The nil return for the city of Chester made in 1852 was an error: cf. Chester City R.O., QSF/85-103.

⁶ Ibid. (1970), 119-20.

⁷ The help of Mr. W. H. L. Brown, Registrar of Lancs. and Ches. Trust Property, in identifying meetings is gratefully acknowledged.

⁸ Fry, *Friends Lend a Hand in Alleviating Unemployment*, 35.

⁹ Friends' Ho. Libr. Meeting-Ho. List; Ches. R.O., Subject file *Quakers*; *Friends Bk. of Meetings* (1961), 55-60.

¹⁰ *Lancs. and Ches. Quarterly Meeting Bk. of Meetings* (1958), 10-78.

¹¹ *Friends Bk. of Meetings* (1961), 55-60.

¹² Ches. R.O., Subject file *Quakers*; *Friends Bk. of Meetings* (1973).

¹³ Inf. from W. H. L. Brown.

¹⁴ *Friends Bk. of Meetings* (1973).

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Stockport, Wallasey, Wilmslow, and Neston,¹⁵ and by 1974 there were 13 Christian Science churches, with reading rooms attached, in the county.¹⁶ By then the Swedenborgians had churches at Chester and Wallasey, besides their earlier church at Stockport,¹⁷ and the Salvation Army still had over 20 corps in Cheshire.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Story of Christian Science Wartime Activities 1939-46* (Boston, Mass. 1947), 431-2.

¹⁶ *Christian Science Jnl.* (1974), 7.

¹⁷ *Yearbk. of General Conference of New Ch.* (1970), 86-7.

¹⁸ *Salvation Army Yearbk.* (1970), 54.

RELIGIOUS HOUSES

MEDIEVAL Cheshire was not well endowed with religious houses and four of its foundations proved short-lived or were moved out of the county. The small number of permanent foundations can probably be explained by the feudal and physical geography of the county and by the lack of monastic life before the Norman Conquest. Although William of Malmesbury believed that St. Werburgh was professed in a nunnery at Chester,¹ the monastic history of Cheshire began in 1092 when Hugh I, earl of Chester, transformed a church of secular canons in Chester into a Benedictine abbey. Earl Hugh and his men amply endowed the abbey, and the earl's successors founded no other monastery within Cheshire, although Ranulph II provided a site in Chester for the Benedictine priory of St. Mary's, the only nunnery in the county. Most of the remaining Cheshire houses date from the 12th century and were founded by the barons and officials of the earls of Chester and usually put under the protection of the earl. The third and final Benedictine house, the small and remote priory at Birkenhead, was founded and endowed by the Massey family in the later 12th century but, in general, the lesser nobility of Cheshire preferred the newer orders whose houses could be founded more cheaply; even so the sites provided often proved unsuitable for permanent occupation and the initial endowments inadequate. William FitzNeal, the constable of Chester, who was significantly not among the first benefactors of Chester abbey, founded and liberally endowed the first house of Augustinian canons in 1115. Originally at Runcorn, it was soon removed to Norton. The only other Augustinian foundation and the only foundation in the east of the county came nearly a century later and had a very brief existence: at the beginning of the 13th century Patrick of Mobberley established a priory at Mobberley which was soon annexed to Rocester abbey in Staffordshire but afterwards given up because of irregularities in its endowment.² The only Premonstratensian house, founded by Adam de Dutton at Warburton in the extreme north of the county at the end of the 12th century, also failed. The county had four houses of the order of Cîteaux or its allied order of Savigny, more than in the neighbouring counties, but those foundations also had a chequered history. Combermere, founded in 1133, was the first. Its first daughter house, founded by Robert the Butler in the mid 12th century on his small estate at Poulton on the western edge of Cheshire, was transferred by Ranulph III, earl of Chester, to Dieulacres in Staffordshire in 1214 because Poulton was too exposed to Welsh attacks.³ Another daughter house, established at Stanlow in the 1170s by John the Constable, remained on its desolate and unsuitable site on the Mersey, for over a century until a particularly destructive flood in 1279 prompted the monks to demand a more secure home; in 1296 most of the convent moved to Whalley in Lancashire, but retained Stanlow as a cell until the dissolution.⁴ The last religious house to be founded in Cheshire was also Cistercian

¹ *Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, i (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxix), p. xv. The monasteries of Bromborough (T. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, ed. J. Nasmith, Cheshire V) and St. Michael's, Chester (*Cal. Chart. R.* 1327-41, 124; Ormerod,

Hist. Ches. i. 354) are equally fictitious.

² *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 248.

³ *Ibid.* 230-1; G. Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 1-5.

⁴ *V.C.H. Lancs.* ii. 131-3.

and was intended to be the largest and most splendid house of the order in England; it failed, however, first at Darnhall and then at Vale Royal, to live up to the grandiose dream of its founder, the Lord Edward.

None of the houses which survived in Cheshire until the dissolution was large or more than locally important. Many of the charters of foundation and endowment exist only in the form of copies and some are suspect; the only surviving cartulary, that of St. Werburgh's, is strictly a register rather than a true cartulary.⁵ Few records of the internal administration of the houses have survived but, apart from St. Werburgh's, none was large enough to develop an elaborate organization. With the notable exception of Ranulph Higden, no intellectual distinction can be claimed for Cheshire monks although chronicles of a sort were produced in Chester and Vale Royal abbeys. Only Chester and Combermere had substantial estates outside the county and the monastic economies were apparently concerned mainly with forest clearing and pastoral farming before the universal movement away from direct cultivation to rents in the 14th and 15th centuries. Apart from the small and poor houses of Birkenhead and St. Mary's, Chester, which both acquired new endowments and sources of income in the 14th century, the Cheshire houses were no poorer than houses in the neighbouring counties but often complained of poverty, especially when the Crown sought assistance in the Welsh and other military campaigns.⁶ Another common grievance was the burden of almsgiving and hospitality; in 1351 the Black Prince ordered the justice of Chester to protect the houses of St. Werburgh's, Vale Royal, and Combermere, which were so burdened by the frequent visits of local people that their possessions hardly sufficed to maintain their few monks.⁷ The three houses thus protected undoubtedly experienced considerable difficulties in the later Middle Ages and were frequently in royal custody during the 14th and early 15th centuries but the difficulties appear to have been caused less by poverty than by incompetent superiors, internal dissension, and involvement in local disorder. In the early 16th century the monasteries apparently became more prosperous again but also more involved in the gentry feuds of the county. They found little local support, however, when threatened with dissolution, and suppression was actively resisted only at Norton where the abbot and some of the canons owed their escape from execution to the struggle between gentry factions to control the county rather than to sympathy for their plight. There was more popular support for the friars. Four of the mendicant orders had been established in Chester during the 13th century and, although none of their convents was large and that of the Friars of the Sack short-lived, the friars remained popular in Chester and its neighbourhood until their suppression in 1538. Richard Ingworth, bishop of Dover, who was responsible for suppressing friaries in North Wales and the West Midlands reported that the friars 'have many favourers, and great labour is made for their continuance'.⁸

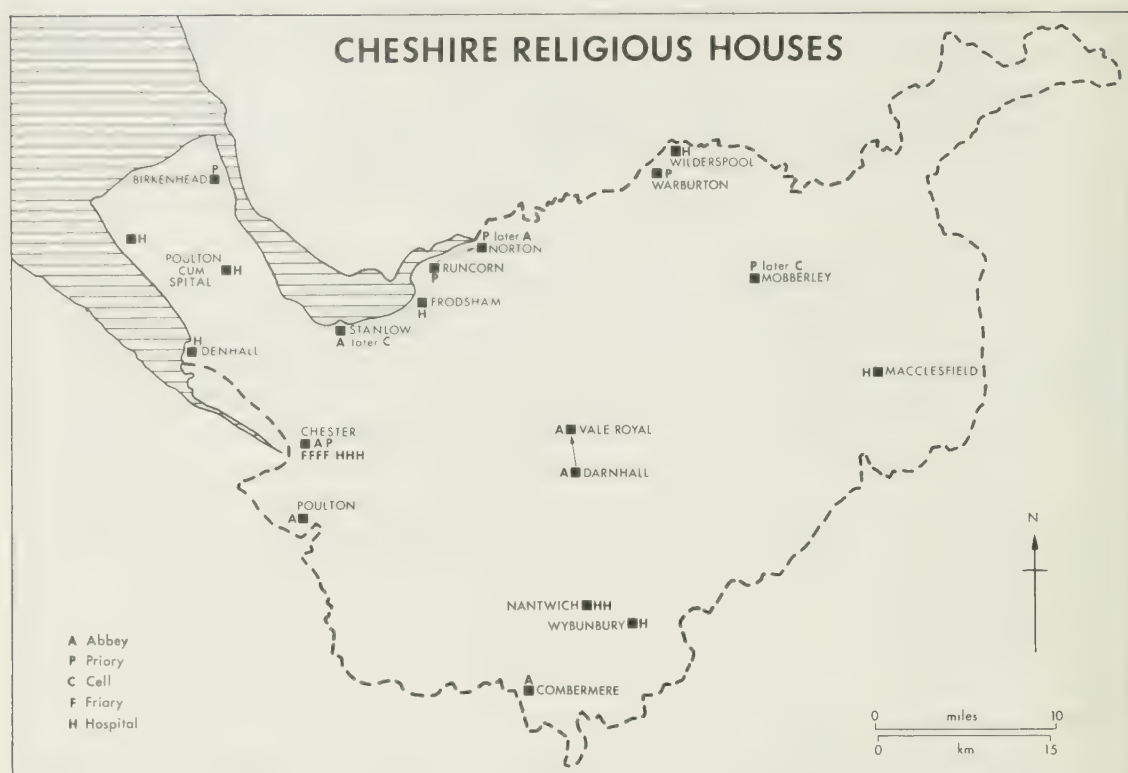
Apart from the Chester hospitals of St. John the Baptist and St. Giles, Boughton, which benefited from the patronage of the earls of Chester, the medieval hospitals of Cheshire were small and insignificant. In addition to those treated below there survive isolated references to some other hospitals, usually communities of lepers, which were probably ephemeral. The lepers of Frodsham were given land in alms by John the Scot, earl of Chester, and in 1259 the warden of the leper hospital of

⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. xxxiv.

⁶ *Cal. Chanc. R. Var.* 264-5, 277; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii.

⁷ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 18.

⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii(2), p. 67.



Macclesfield was given a royal protection for five years.⁹ In 1283 the brethren of the house of lepers of Bebington were licensed to inclose and cultivate part of the forest of Wirral; that hospital, which gave its name to the hamlet of Spital Old Hall in Poulton Lancelyn, was probably attached to the chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr which had been founded before 1183.¹⁰ At the beginning of the 14th century it was said that a leper house formerly stood on the boundary between the Wirral manors of Irby and Thurstaston and fifty years later there is an incidental reference to the Wilderspool 'spital'.¹¹ A hospital at Wybunbury dedicated to St. George and the Holy Cross, which occurs in 1464 may be identical with a fraternity of the Holy Cross in neighbouring Nantwich.¹² Place-names suggest hospitals in Stanthorne, Mottram St. Andrew, and Knutsford Booths.¹³

The earliest references to hermits and anchorites in the county are legendary rather than factual. Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury (890–914), is said by Gervase of Canterbury to have lived for years as a hermit in the Isle of Chester and given his name to Plemstall,¹⁴ and, according to Gerald of Wales, King Harold II fled wounded from Hastings to Chester where he survived as an anchorite in the chapel of St. James, close to St. John's church. Ranulph Higden treats the latter story with some scepticism but adopts from Gerald of Wales another story that the Emperor Henry V died as a hermit near Chester and adds that Henry lived ten years at Chester under the name of Godescall.¹⁵ According to Henry Bradshaw, William FitzNeal, constable of Chester, encountered a monk 'dwelling contemplative' on Hilbre Island

⁹ *Ches. in Pipe R.* (R.S.L.C. xcii), 42, 47; *Cal. Pat.* 1258–66, 20.

¹⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 74; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 443; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 126; ii (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxxii), pp. xxxv, 381; 3 *Sheaf*, xxxii, p. 63.

¹¹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 387; 28 *D.K.R.* 55.

¹² T. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, ed. J. Nasmith, Cheshire XXI; J. Hall, *Hist. of Town and Par. of Nantwich*, 281, 285.

¹³ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 262–3; *P.N. Ches.* (E.P.N.S.), i. 205; ii. 79.

¹⁴ *Gervasii Cantuariensis Opera* (Rolls Ser.), 350; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii, p. 808 n.; *P.N. Ches.* iv. 135–6.

¹⁵ *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera* (Rolls Ser.), i. 186; vi. 139 and n., 140 and n.; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden* (Rolls Ser.), vii. 245; viii. 35.

in the early 12th century and there is an indication in the early 14th century that the cell which was established on Hilbre by St. Werburgh's abbey sometimes held monks who had vowed to live in solitude.¹⁶ There are references to anchorites attached to three of the churches of Chester. In 1284 Queen Eleanor gave alms of £6 3s. 0½d. to build a chapel and cell for the recluse of St. Martin's church and in 1300 the maidservant of the anchoress of St. Chad's church occurs in a lawsuit.¹⁷ It was only, however, the anchorite's chapel and cell of St. James in the graveyard of St. John's, opposite the south entrance to the church, which seems to have achieved any permanence. In the mid 14th century it held monks of Vale Royal (1342) and Norton (1356) and a Dominican friar (1363), and in 1565 a lease of property formerly belonging to St. John's College included the 'anker's chapel'.¹⁸ Outside Chester an anchorite at Frodsham was paid royal alms of 1d. a day between 1274 and 1278 and a recluse at Christleton was given a gift of 2 marks by Edward I in 1279–80.¹⁹ There were also recluses at Middlewich (1283),²⁰ Stockport (1361)²¹ and Macclesfield (1301 and 1509).²² References to hermits and hermitages are more geographically and chronologically diverse. A local family took its name from a hermitage at Cranage in the 13th century and at Tarporley the chantry chapel dedicated to the Virgin and St. Leonard was also known as the hermitage of the Rood.²³ In 1367 Simon de Goddesmere, hermit, was licensed to have an oratory in his hermitage at Wilderspool and in 1396 the hermit of St. Agatha the Virgin at Tarvin was granted an oak to repair Holme Street and Stamford Bridge.²⁴ In 1424 William Heyworth, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, leased two gardens to Nicholas Baker, the hermit of Wybunbury, for 99 years on condition that they should be held by fit priests or honest hermits.²⁵ There was at least one hermitage in Chester in the later Middle Ages. In 1358 John Spicer, hermit, was pardoned for acquiring a piece of land between the Dee and the quarry of Chester and building on it a hermitage enclosed within a wall; in 1363 Spicer was described as the hermit by the bridge of Chester when he was commissioned to collect a grant of pavage.²⁶ His hermitage was probably that of St. James beyond the bridge of Chester in Handbridge in which John Benet, hermit of St. James, Chester, was accused of receiving robbers, sheltering common malefactors, and keeping a brothel; in 1456 the mayor and sheriffs of Chester were ordered to investigate the conduct of his successor, Jeven ap Bleth' ap Carwet, recently appointed to the hermitage by the king.²⁷

¹⁶ Below, Chester Abbey.

¹⁷ *Tribute to an Antiquary*, ed. F. Emmison & R. Stephens, 117; B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 61v.

¹⁸ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/2, f. 115v.; B/A/1/3, f. 138v.; *1st Reg. Stretton* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. N.S. x(2)), 162; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 353–4; *Cal. Pat.* 1563–6, p. 349. There was also an 'anchorite's cell' overhanging the cliff on the south wall of the churchyard in which two skeletons were found c. 1770: Lysons, *Mag. Brit.* ii(2), 624.

¹⁹ *Ches. in Pipe R.* 113, 118, 121, 135.

²⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 74.

²¹ *Lancs. and Ches. Wills, 1301–1752* (R.S.L.C. xxx), 7. Between 1361 and 1374 John Boner is called recluse, anchorite, or hermit of Stockport: *2nd Reg. Stretton* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. N.S. viii), 57, 68, 96. There was a chantry chapel or

hermitage on Stockport bridge: Earwaker, *E. Ches.* i. 420.

²² 3 *Sheaf*, xliii, p. 12.

²³ J. P. Earwaker, *Hist. of Ancient Par. of Sandbach*, 203; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 236–7; iii. 129; Hist. MSS. Com. 22, 11th Rep. VII, Ellesmere, p. 138.

²⁴ *2nd Reg. Stretton*, 37, 116; 3 *Sheaf*, xxviii, p. 79. For other refs. to hermits in mid 14th cent. see *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 310; W. F. Irvine, 'Trespases in Forest of Wirral in 1351', *T.H.S.L.C.* ci. 43.

²⁵ Lysons, *Mag. Brit.* ii(2), 826.

²⁶ 36 *D.K.R.* 436; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 457. In 1367 he was licensed to have an oratory in his hermitage: *2nd Reg. Stretton*, 38.

²⁷ R. H. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 169; 37 *D.K.R.* 124.

HOUSES OF BENEDICTINE MONKS

THE PRIORY OF BIRKENHEAD

THE priory of St. James the Great at Birkenhead stood on a wooded headland on the north-eastern shore of the Wirral peninsula near a river ferry across the Mersey to Liverpool; the existence of a ferry may have been the reason for the foundation of a monastery on such an isolated site and for its dedication.¹ According to John Leland the priory was founded for sixteen monks² and was a cell of Chester abbey.³ Although it is possible that the original monks were supplied by St. Werburgh's, there is no further evidence of dependency. The date of foundation and the identity of the founder are as obscure as most other aspects of the history of the priory. The traditional date is 1150⁴ but there is no documentary evidence that the priory existed before the second half of the reign of Henry II.⁵ The nature of the priory's endowment suggests that a member of the Massey family of Dunham founded it, probably the second Hamon de Massey who died in 1185.⁶ A Hamon de Massey granted the monks the right to elect their priors from among their own number; the right is likely to have been the gift of the founder and the Pope Alexander who confirmed the grant was probably Alexander III (1159–81).⁷

Most of the lands and churches held by the priory at its dissolution had been part of the Massey fee in the 11th century and probably formed the original 12th-century endowment. Apart from the Birkenhead site the house held lands in the neighbouring manors of Claughton, Moreton, Tranmere, Higher Bebington, and Saughall; the churches of Bidston and Backford were probably also gifts from the founder.⁸ The interest of the prior in the church of Bowdon, the income from which amounted to nearly half of the revenues of the house in 1535,⁹ was more contentious. Half of the manor was probably held by the house from its foundation and in the early 1270s the prior claimed that a predecessor at the beginning of the 13th century had presented to the church. The legal dispute was settled in favour of the Massey family but in 1278 the fifth Hamon de Massey granted the advowson, together with a small holding of land in Dunham, to the priory; in return he and his ancestors and heirs

were admitted to all the benefits of the house.¹⁰ Evidence concerning other benefactors and endowments is extremely scanty. By an unusual arrangement the house shared the tithes of Wallasey church with Chester abbey; that must have been acquired early as St. Werburgh's was granted its share by William de Waley before 1182. The priory also held land in Wallasey and maintained a chapel, 'Lees Kirk', there.¹¹ Some of the priory's lands in Lancashire, which were never very considerable, had been acquired before 1200. At the end of the 12th century the prior and convent leased out part of their holding in Burnden in the manor of Great Lever in Middleton and before 1212 Henry de Walton gave the priory 3 a. at Newsham in Walton. The priory also held land in Melling (in Halsall) but the date of the gift and the donor's identity are unknown.¹² A known benefactor was Hugh Domville of Oxtun and Brimstage who granted the priory a house and land in Oxtun early in the reign of Henry III; his grant gave rise to litigation between the priory and the Domville family in 1282 and later the prior and Roger Domville settled the bounds between Claughton and Oxtun.¹³ By the 1260s the house had acquired a small rent charge on property in Chester, and in 1271 Edmund earl of Lancaster gave it 15 a. more at Newsham.¹⁴ The earls of Chester apparently showed no interest in the house apart from exempting the priory from the obligation of housing and feeding the serjeants of the peace and any forest officials other than the itinerant serjeants of the master forester of Wirral and freeing the prior from attendance at hundred courts.¹⁵ Thus, apart from the initial endowment by the Massey family, all the benefactions and privileges for which evidence survives were insubstantial and the house was to remain small and poor throughout its existence.

Writs of protection were obtained from the king in 1201 and 1202, in 1205 the prior acted as papal delegate in arbitration over the church of Childwall in Lancashire, and in 1225 he attended the General Chapter of the Benedictine order in England.¹⁶ By the early 1280s the house was very distressed financially, probably for four reasons: litigation with the Massey family over the advowson of Bowdon and pasture

¹ There is a full account of the priory in R. Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory and the Mersey Ferry* (1925). The original dedication was a double one to St. Mary & St. James: Dugdale, *Mon.* iv. 241.

² A much larger number than is found later: below.

³ Leland, *Itin. in Wales*, 1536–9, ed. Toulmin-Smith, 92; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 9.

⁴ The octocentenary was commemorated in 1950: W. F. Bushell, 'The Ancient Graveyard of Birkenhead Priory', *T.H.S.L.C.* cviii. 141.

⁵ T. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, ed. J. Nasmith, Cheshire III. Stewart-Brown (*Birkenhead Priory*, 1) was inclined to place the foundation in the first half of the reign of Hen. II on architectural evidence.

⁶ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 1–2; G. Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 44; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 458; J. Brownbill, 'Hist. of Old Parish of Bidston, Ches.', *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxxvii. 162.

⁷ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 10.

⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 2, 55–9, 68–9; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 458; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 212. For the bounds of the site see Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 6–8.

⁹ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 212.

¹⁰ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 64–6; Dugdale, *Mon.* iv. 241.

¹¹ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 62–3; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii. pp. 336–7; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 9.

¹² Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 71–2; *V.C.H. Lancs.* iii. 24, 209; v. 182, 186; *B.L. Add. MS.* 32103, ff. 4, 52.

¹³ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 56; 36 *D.K.R.* 37; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 46, 51, 53.

¹⁴ W. F. Irvine, 'Chester in 12th & 13th Cents.', *J.C.A.S.* n.s. x. 28–9; *Cal. Pat.* 1324–7, 245.

¹⁵ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 14–15, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 16; *V.C.H. Lancs.* iii. 105; *Charters of Eng. Black Monks*, i (Camd. 3rd ser. xlv), 21.



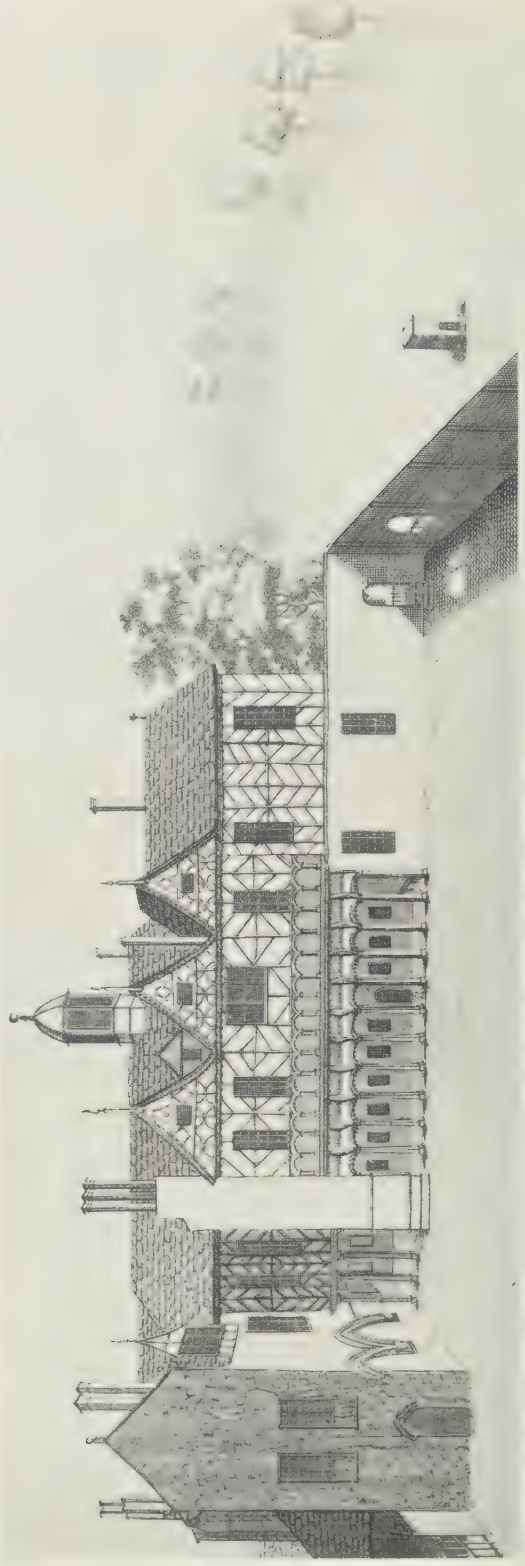
NORTON PRIORY: ENTRANCE PASSAGE
linking the outer courtyard with the cloister



BIRKENHEAD PRIORY: WEST CLOISTER RANGE



VALE ROYAL ABBEY, c. 1774



COMBERMERE ABBEY, 1727

rights in Bidston and Claughton,¹⁷ the expense of visits to the priory by Edward I in 1275 and 1277,¹⁸ the strain produced by the increase of traffic across the Mersey, and possibly the cost of rebuilding the church.¹⁹ In April 1283 the prior and Geoffrey of Cheadle acknowledged that they owed 17 marks to William Hamilton, canon of Wells and later royal chancellor, but the debt must have been considerably larger than that acknowledged as at the following Michaelmas the prior and convent granted Hamilton an annual pension of 70 marks for life in consideration of his services to them.²⁰ This large pension must have placed a considerable strain on the priory's revenues and Hamilton renounced it in 1289 when the prior acknowledged that 62 marks were owing.²¹ The prior was also in debt to Chief Justice Ralph Hengham: in 1287 the prior acknowledged a debt of 34 marks and goods worth 13½ marks were seized by the justice of Chester; part of the debt was still owing in 1309 when it was reported that further goods worth £5 had been seized but there was nothing more to distrain.²² The settlement of the dispute over the advowson of Bowdon by the grant of Hamon de Massey in 1278²³ may have been intended to alleviate the financial problems of the priory and in 1284 the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield allotted the income and expenses of the parish between the priory and the vicar.²⁴ In the same year, however, the prior admitted the right of Ralph Vernon to the advowson of the church of Davenham in return for a payment of 70 marks, doubtless in order to pay an instalment of the pension due to William Hamilton.²⁵ There is an indication, also in 1284, of the problems caused by the increased use of the ferry. The prior complained to the king that the public highway ran through the middle of the priory court and was given leave to deal with the nuisance by diverting the road and enclosing the priory with a wall or hedge and ditch. When the prior was accused in 1340 of injuring travellers by the removal of the road he cited the royal licence in his defence.²⁶ In 1291 the priory's income from its temporalities in Claughton and Moreton amounted to only £8 13s.²⁷ but attempts to increase the revenues from its estates led to frequent accusations of assarting and cutting down timber from the officials of Wirral forest;²⁸ in two cases of alleged assarting in Claughton the prior was able to produce licences granted in 1259 and 1305 by the earls of Chester.²⁹

The finances of the priory underwent another crisis in the 1310s, mainly because of expenses arising from the ferry to Liverpool. In 1310 the prior and convent

complained to the royal council that there were no inns nearer than Chester for travellers using the ferry and neither the revenues of the house, barely 200 marks a year, nor its buildings sufficed for the burdens of hospitality; they asked permission to build lodgings at the ferry and sell food to the passengers.³⁰ In 1317 the Crown licensed them to build lodgings to house travellers delayed by the weather and in the following year those in charge of the lodgings were allowed to buy and sell food.³¹ The fees then charged by the Liverpool ferrymen elicited complaints from the inhabitants of Wirral and in 1330 Edward III, as a mark of favour to the monks and to travellers, granted the priory the right to ferry men, horses, and goods across the Mersey and to charge reasonable tolls.³² The grant may simply have licensed charges for a service which the monks had previously operated free as a work of charity, as the prior implied when the Black Prince forced him to defend his right to the ferry in 1353.³³ In 1357 the prior had once more to uphold the right to the ferry when it was alleged in the forest court that the building of lodgings damaged the game in the forest and that the ferry tolls were excessive.³⁴ The income from tolls and the provision of lodgings, which in 1536 was valued at £4 6s. 8d. a year, must have helped to alleviate the financial problems of the priory and it is perhaps significant that it never took up a licence, issued on the day before the grant of ferry rights, enabling it to appropriate Chester abbey's half of Wallasey church.³⁵ The priory itself used the ferry to sell produce at Liverpool market; from the early 14th century it held land and a granary in Liverpool and in 1350 the prior and a fellow monk were accused of assault and theft during the market.³⁶

One attempt by the Crown to help the priory after its appeal for help in 1310 turned out to be ill-judged. In 1316 the house was given custody of the hospital of St. John the Baptist in Chester, whose wardens had mismanaged its endowment.³⁷ The intention was both to ensure the maintenance of the services of the hospital and to augment the revenues of the priory, but the prior, on taking up his duties, reported that much of the property of the hospital had been alienated.³⁸ The brief custody by the priory did little to remedy the mismanagement of the hospital and only increased the financial problems of the priory itself. The hospital was removed from the priory's control in 1341 and in 1345 the prior and convent granted an annual pension of 5 marks to the new warden of the hospital, Richard of Wolveston, for life; at the same time the prior acknowledged a debt of 200 marks to Wolveston, 100

¹⁷ *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 5, 20, 23.

¹⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 18–22; *Cal. Close*, 1272–9, 209–10, 400.

¹⁹ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 112; below.

²⁰ *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 233, 241; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 78–9.

²¹ *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 241; 1288–96, 42.

²² *Ibid.* 1279–88, 494; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 80.

²³ Above.

²⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, xvii, p. 78.

²⁵ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 68. It is not known when or from whom the priory had acquired its claim to the advowson.

²⁶ *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 276; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 23, 39.

²⁷ *Tax. Eccl. (Rec. Com.)*, 258.

²⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 39–43.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 39, 57; 26 *D.K.R.* 52.

³⁰ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 133; *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 329.

³¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1317–21, 54, 108–9.

³² *Ibid.* 1327–30, 505.

³³ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 25, 136–7; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 113.

³⁴ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 139. For details of fees charged in 1353, 1357, and 1499 see *ibid.* 26, 139.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 63, 146; *Cal. Pat.* 1327–30, 512.

³⁶ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 17, 27, 69–70; *Deeds and Papers of Moore Fam.* (R.S.L.C. lxxvii), pp. 1, 11, 30, 36, 66, 73, 79; 3 *Sheaf*, xii, p. 9; V.C.H. *Lancs.* iv. 9.

³⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1313–17, 476; below, hospital of St. John.

³⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 74.

marks of which was still owing in 1353.³⁹ In 1361 Roger Lestrangle bought the advowson of the priory from the heirs of Hamon de Massey through the good offices of Henry, duke of Lancaster⁴⁰ and in 1397 John Lestrangle sold it to John Stanley of Lathom, the ancestor of the earls of Derby.⁴¹ The changes of patron did not, however, affect the monks' practice of electing their own priors and thereafter obtaining the bishop's confirmation of their choice. Episcopal injunctions for 1348 afford some information on the internal state of the house in the mid 14th century.⁴² As might be expected the visitor was mainly concerned about the community's finances: since suspicion had arisen about the administration of the goods of the house, each obediendary was to present annual accounts to the whole chapter or to a committee composed of the more prudent monks and, since there were few monks, the visitor advised that only the cellarer or the sacrist be deputed to assist the prior. The prior was enjoined to treat his brethren with charity and seek the advice of the whole house on difficult matters. He was also ordered to repair the priory buildings, particularly the roofs of the church and the cloisters. A lamp was to be kept burning in the church day and night and a secular priest was to be appointed within a month to serve in the church, which suggests that none of the monks was in priestly orders.⁴³ No further comments were made on the behaviour of the prior, even though he was claiming the right to keep greyhounds and other dogs in the priory,⁴⁴ and in general discipline in the house appears to have been well-maintained, except that silence was often broken; in the previous year the house had been selected as a suitable refuge for one of the monks of St. Werburgh's who had criticised their own abbot's behaviour.⁴⁵ The smallness of the community, which attracted comment from the visitor in 1348, persisted later in the century; there were only five monks, including the prior, at Birkenhead in 1379 and 1381.⁴⁶

Little is known of the size or state of the house until the late 15th century. The monks or their tenants were sometimes involved in lawsuits but there is no evidence of serious disorder.⁴⁷ In 1436, however, the priory was the scene of a notorious crime: Isabel, the widow of Sir John Butler of Bewsey (Lancs.), was abducted by William Poole, a member of the Wirral family which supplied stewards for the priory in the 15th and 16th centuries, forcibly married to him in Bidston church, and imprisoned at Birkenhead where she was discovered by Sir Thomas Stanley.⁴⁸ Some fragmentary

personal details of the lives of the monks have also survived: two priors were bastards, and one had been a murderer and had undertaken a penitential pilgrimage to Rome before being professed as a monk at Birkenhead.⁴⁹ In 1423 the prior, John Wood, failed to attend the meeting of the General Chapter allegedly because of madness.⁵⁰ Also in 1423 Robert Urmston was acquitted on a charge of taking a worsted cape and silver-gilt brooch from a fellow monk; since the prior was mad and Urmston became prior himself in 1425, that may have been an over-enthusiastic attempt to enforce simplicity of dress.⁵¹ Urmston was succeeded in 1435 as prior by Hamon Bostock, the prior of St. Werburgh's, perhaps because there was no suitable candidate in the house.⁵² In 1456 the bishop, while approving the monks' choice of the subprior as their next prior, condemned clandestine elections and confirmations and ordered the public confirmation of the election in St. John's church, Chester.⁵³ By the end of the 15th century the house was no larger nor more prosperous; in 1496 there were only five monks and it was exempted from clerical taxation on the grounds of poverty.⁵⁴

The priory was visited three times by Bishop Blythe or his commissioners between 1518 and 1524; on each occasion there were seven members of the house, including two novices in 1518 and one in 1521 and 1524. The offices of precentor or sacrist and kitchenier seem to have been rotated among the monks, although in 1518 one monk was both kitchenier and cellarer. On each occasion the prior and his brethren reported that discipline was good and nothing needed reformation: services and silence were observed, the rule was read daily, no monk was suspected of incontinence, no suspect women had access to the house and no boys slept in the dormitory; inventories had been prepared and accounts rendered regularly; in 1521 and 1524 it was reported that necessary repairs had been undertaken. The house was not, however, always free from debt. In 1518 the prior reported that there was a debt of £30 but a further £70 had been paid off since the previous visitation; in 1521 the house was said to be free from debt but by 1524 a further debt of 100 marks had been incurred because the lease of Bowdon church, which had been granted before the time of the prior to Sir William Booth, had been redeemed.⁵⁵ There had been several disputes at the end of the 14th century between the priory and the Massey family of Hale which held the other half of the manor.⁵⁶ The rectory was leased in 1487 to Hamon Massey of

³⁹ Ibid. 79; R. Stewart-Brown, 'Hospital of St. John at Chester', *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxviii. 73-4, 103; 28 *D.K.R.* 44; *P.R.O.*, CHES 29/56, rot. 18; 29/64, rot. 17.

⁴⁰ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxxvii. 172-4; R. Somerville, *History of Duchy of Lancaster*, i. 39. Both Edmund and Henry, earls of Lancaster, made grants to the priory: *Cal. Pat.* 1324-7, 245; *V.C.H. Lancs.* iii. 14.

⁴¹ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxxvii. 172-4.

⁴² *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/3, f. 114; translated in Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 75-7.

⁴³ Ordinations of members of the house occur regularly from the 1360s: e.g. 2nd *Reg. Stretton*, 169, 202; *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/6, ff. 141, 142v.; B/A/1/7, ff. 222, 224v.; B/A/1/9, ff. 209v., 210, 220, 228, 238; B/A/1/12, ff. 228, 230, 241v., 259; B/A/1/13, f. 296v.; B/A/1/14ii, sub 1510, 1517, 1519, 1524, 1526.

⁴⁴ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 41.

⁴⁵ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 155; below, Chester abbey.

⁴⁶ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 22; *Traditio*, ii. 189.

⁴⁷ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 46-9. The house was visited in 1400 during Abp. Arundel's metropolitan visitation but no injunctions survive: Lambeth Pal. Libr., *Reg. Arundel*, i, f. 477v.

⁴⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 31-2; *Rot. Parl.* iv. 497-8.

⁴⁹ *Cal. Papal Reg.* v. 416; vii. 126; viii. 543.

⁵⁰ *Chapters of Eng. Black Monks*, ii (Camd. 3rd ser. xlvii), 147.

⁵¹ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 31; 3 *Sheaf*, ix, p. 117.

⁵² *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/9, f. 122v.

⁵³ Ibid. B/A/1/11, ff. 39v.-40v.; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 88-9.

⁵⁴ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 168; *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/13, f. 196. In 1465 the prior was sued for a debt of £280 by the abbot of Vale Royal: *P.R.O.*, CHES 29/169, rot. 4.

⁵⁵ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 7-8, 54-5, 127-8.

⁵⁶ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 67.

Rixton for 40 years at a rent of £40 to the priory and after Massey's death the lease was transferred in 1508 to Sir William Booth and his brother; the prior denied the validity of the lease in 1510 but it seems to have been redeemed at considerable expense by Prior Sharpe between 1521 and 1524.⁵⁷ Sharpe was praised as prior by his fellow monks and wills of the period reveal that the local gentry held him in high regard.⁵⁸ The royal visitors in 1536 found that one monk was incontinent and estimated the income of the house at £108 with an outstanding debt of £20.⁵⁹ The valuation of 1535 shows that the gross annual income was £102 16s. 10d. (£90 13s. net.). Spiritual possessions produced £82 17s. 6½d. while temporal property produced only £19 19s. 3½d. Regular payments included pensions to the rector of Trafford and the vicar of Backford and fees to a steward, a receiver, and bailiffs in Bowdon, Cloughton and Moreton, Wallasey, and Lancashire.⁶⁰ The priory property as listed in 1536 after it had passed to the Crown⁶¹ consisted of lands and rents in Birkenhead, Moreton, Cloughton (with the 'manor of Woolton'), Kirkby in Waley (in Wallasey), Tranmere, Higher Bebington, Backford, Saughall, Bidston, Heswall, Upton (unidentified), and Chester; in Lancashire, lands and rents in Seacombe, Barnston, Leftwich, Liverpool, Warrington, News-ham, and Melling; the rectories of Backford, Bidston, and Bowdon and half the rectory of Wallasey. The gross annual value of the estates was then £129 18s. 10d.

The priory was included in the list of monasteries worth less than £200 a year and was liable for dissolution under the terms of the Act of 1536.⁶² It was probably dissolved in May or June 1536 as the prior was awarded an annual pension of £12 at the beginning of July; no deed of surrender or inventory has survived.⁶³ In the following year the former prior and four monks were dispensed to hold benefices with a complete change of habit.⁶⁴ The site of the priory was leased immediately to Ralph Worsley, a member of the royal household,⁶⁵ and in 1545 Worsley purchased the site and most of the priory's lands in Cheshire for £568 11s. 6d. The site included the buildings within the precincts, a mill, a flax field, fishyards and the ferry, ferryhouse and boat.⁶⁶ The priory buildings were allowed to fall into ruin after the dissolution, apart from the chapter house which was retained in use, first as a domestic chapel and later as a chapel for the extra-parochial district of Birkenhead until the new church of St. Mary was built on the site of the priory graveyard after 1819.⁶⁷ The ruins were purchased by public appeal in 1896 and their care entrusted to the corporation of Birkenhead; in 1913 a

faculty was obtained to renovate the chapter house and it was dedicated for use as a chapel in 1919.⁶⁸

The two-bayed chapter house is the only surviving structure of the 12th century but the cloister preserves the scale of the original layout and that suggests a small and not very pretentious group of buildings. The church lay to the south of the cloister and may or may not have been cruciform before the rebuilding of the nave with arcades in the early 13th century, when the original room or slype against the south side of the chapter house was demolished to make room for the north transept. The conjunction of transept and chapter house is reminiscent of St. Mary's Abbey at Chester, and the dormitory perhaps also followed the Chester plan and ran eastward from the cloister a short distance north of the chapter house.

The west claustral range was rebuilt in the later 13th century and modified, perhaps in two stages, in the 14th century. In its final form it provided a small two-storeyed lodging, comprising on the first floor chamber, parlour, and chapel, at the south end, with a two-bayed hall to the north and a cross passage north of that. The arrangement suggests that it was for the accommodation of the prior whose hall was doubtless used for the entertainment of more important guests.

The north claustral range was rebuilt in the later 14th century, perhaps a little to the north of its predecessor, and contained the refectory above a vaulted undercroft. A northward extension at its east end may have housed the misericord. A first floor was added above the chapter house in the 14th century, perhaps to provide direct access to the transept from the dormitory.

A short distance to the west of the main buildings a house which survived into the 19th century is said to have been the building which was put up to provide accommodation for guests awaiting the ferry.

PRIORS

Robert, occurs about 1190.⁶⁹

Ralph, occurs about 1200.⁷⁰

Robert, occurs about 1206.⁷¹

Oliver, occurs about 1216.⁷²

William of Walley, occurs from about 1250 to about 1283.⁷³

Robert, occurs 1282, 1283.⁷⁴

Robert of Bechington, occurs from 1320–2, died 1339.⁷⁵

James of Neston, elected 1339, resigned immediately.⁷⁶

⁵⁷ Ibid. 67–8.

⁵⁸ Bp. Blythe's *Visitations*, 7, 55; *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, i (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xxxiii), 8, 94, 96, 185.

⁵⁹ L. & P. Hen. VIII, x, p. 141.

⁶⁰ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 212.

⁶¹ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 96–7; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 462; *Lancs. and Ches. Rec. in P.R.O.* i (R.S.L.C. vii), 101–2.

⁶² L. & P. Hen. VIII, x, p. 517.

⁶³ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 94.

⁶⁴ *Faculty Off. Regs.*, ed. D. S. Chambers, 98. The ref. to Birkenhead (ibid. 99) is a mistake for Norton.

⁶⁵ L. & P. Hen. VIII, xiii (2), p. 578.

⁶⁶ Ibid. xx (1), p. 217; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 97–8.

⁶⁷ T.H.S.L.C. cviii. 145; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 103–4. For views of the ruins in 1656 and 1727 see Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, facing pp. 9, 17.

⁶⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 106–8.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 84–5; B.L. Add. MS. 32103, ff. 4, 52.

⁷⁰ Knowles, Brooke and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 30.

⁷¹ *Whalley Coucher Bk.* iii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xvi), 828–9.

⁷² Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 85; 3 *Sheaf*, xx, pp. 60–1.

⁷³ 3 *Sheaf*, xlv, p. 26.

⁷⁴ *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 241; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 46.

⁷⁵ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 85–6; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 113.

⁷⁶ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 86; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 113.

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Henry of Bechington, appointed 1339, occurs until 1342.⁷⁷

Thomas of Tyddesbury, occurs from 1350 to 1357.⁷⁸

Roger of Tyddesbury, occurs from 1361 to 1400.⁷⁹

Robert of Handbridge, occurs from 1401, died 1408.⁸⁰

John Wood, elected 1408, occurs until 1425.⁸¹

Robert Urmston, occurs from 1425, died 1435.⁸²

Hamon Bostock, elected 1435, occurs until 1439.⁸³

Richard Norman, occurs from 1441, died 1456.⁸⁴

Hugh Boner, elected 1456, died before 1462.⁸⁵

Thomas Reynforth, elected 1462, died 1473.⁸⁶

Hugh Gardener, resigned 1486.⁸⁷

Thomas Chester, or Tassy, elected 1486, died 1499.⁸⁸

Nicholas Stace, or Tassy, elected 1499, occurs until 1508.⁸⁹

Hugh Hyne, occurs from 1509, died 1514.⁹⁰

John Sharpe, elected 1514, surrendered the priory in 1536.⁹¹

A seal in use in 1390–1⁹² is a pointed oval and depicts St. James on a diapered ground standing under a canopy. He wears a pilgrim's hat and cloak and a wallet on his left side; his right hand holds a staff and his left a book; in the base is a kneeling figure under a canopy. Legend, lombardic: *SIGILLUM COMMUNE PRIORATUS SANCTI IACOBI DE BIRKENEVED IN COM. CESTRIE*.

THE ABBEY OF CHESTER

IN 1092 Hugh I, earl of Chester, took the first steps towards the transformation of a church of secular canons dedicated to St. Werburgh into a Benedictine abbey. The early history of the church of canons and its connection with St. Werburgh is a matter of 'legend and guesswork'.⁹³ The legend is preserved in the writings of two monks of Chester: Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, of the mid 14th century and Henry Bradshaw's life of St. Werburgh, of the early 16th. According to that tradition the body of St. Werburgh,

daughter of Wulfhere, king of Mercia (657–74), was carried to Chester in 874 from its resting place at Hanbury in Staffordshire by nuns fleeing from the Danes; the shrine was received into the mother church of Chester, dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul and founded 'soon after Lucius and afore Kynge Arthure'.⁹⁴ The details of the story are suspect. Chester was possibly uninhabited at that period. The saint's remains, which were at Chester before the end of the 10th century,⁹⁵ may have been acquired with Hanbury and its church, which belonged to St. Werburgh of Chester in 1066 but had been lost to Henry de Ferrers by 1086.⁹⁶ There are further doubtful legends concerning the foundation at Chester of a church of secular canons dedicated to St. Werburgh: according to Henry Bradshaw, Æthelflaed, sister of Edward the Elder, enlarged the original church for secular canons in honour of St. Werburgh and transferred the original dedication to a new parish church in the centre of the city, but Bradshaw also mentions that a tablet in St. John's church ascribed the foundation of the house of canons to Æthelflaed's nephew, Edmund. King Athelstan has also been credited with the foundation, since Higden states that there were secular canons serving St. Werburgh at Chester from the time of Athelstan until the arrival of the Normans. Of the three rival founders Æthelflaed, who, with her husband Ethelred, restored the city in 907, is the most likely, although there is no definite evidence of the existence of a church of canons dedicated to St. Werburgh at Chester before 958.⁹⁷ In that year Edgar, king of the Mercians, granted to the *familia* of St. Werburgh 17 hides of land in Hoseley (Flints.), Cheveley, Huntington, Upton, Aston, and Barrow. Barrow and Upton were lost before 1066.⁹⁸ Apart from the statement by Florence of Worcester that Leofric, earl of Mercia, enriched the house with valuable ornaments nothing further is known of it before the Norman Conquest.⁹⁹ In 1086 the church had 13 houses in Chester, one occupied by the *custos* or warden and the others by the canons. Three holdings outside Chester, in Burwardsley, Stanney, and Hanbury, had been lost between 1066 and 1086 but the remaining 21 holdings, in Hoseley, Cheveley, Huntington, Middleton Grange, Saughton, Boughton, Iddinshall, Wervin, Croughton, Lea-by-Backford, Sutton, Saughall, Shorwick, Neston, Raby,

⁷⁷ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 113; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 86.

⁷⁸ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 86.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 86; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 434.

⁸⁰ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 86–7; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, f. 97.

⁸¹ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 87; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, f. 97.

⁸² P.R.O., CHES 29/129 rot. 24d.; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 87; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, f. 122v.

⁸³ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 87; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, f. 122v.

⁸⁴ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 88; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/11, f. 39v.

⁸⁵ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 89; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/11, f. 39v.; B/A/1/12, f. 100. Subprior.

⁸⁶ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 82–3, 89; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, f. 100v.

⁸⁷ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, f. 120v.

⁸⁸ Ibid. f. 120v.; B/A/1/13, f. 233; Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 89.

⁸⁹ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 89–90; Lich. Jt.

R.O., B/A/1/13, f. 233; B/A/1/14i, f. 57v. (date blank).

⁹⁰ Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 90; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14i, ff. 56, 57v. (date blank).

⁹¹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14i, f. 56; above.

⁹² Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 80–1; *T.H.S.L.C.* xxxix, facing p. 156; xl, pp. 165–6; xlii, facing p. 154; B.L. Harl. MS. 2153, f. 188.

⁹³ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. vii.

⁹⁴ Ibid. pp. viii–xv; V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 135; *Life of Saint Werburge of Chester* by Henry Bradshaw (E.E.T.S. lxxxviii), 146; *Polychronicon* Ranulphi Higden, iv (Rolls Ser.), 126, 366.

⁹⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. xiv. The figures of St. Peter & St. Paul appear on one of the abbey's seals, described below.

⁹⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. x, xiv.

⁹⁷ Ibid. pp. xv–xvii; *Life of St. Werburge*, 150–2; *Polychronicon* Ran. Higden, vi. 128.

⁹⁸ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. xviii, 8–13. Aston was probably the 'Midestone' held by the canons in 1086, later Middleton Grange: *ibid.* p. xviii.

⁹⁹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. xviii–xix.

Bridge Trafford, Ince, Pulford, Wepre and Lache, provided an annual income of over £11.¹ Hugh I, earl of Chester, who was a noted monastic benefactor and wished to have an impressive religious house in the centre of his power, repeatedly sought the help of St. Anselm in reforming the college of secular canons at Chester. In 1092 Anselm answered Earl Hugh's third invitation and spent some time (*plures dies*) at Chester supervising the preliminary stages of the transformation of the college into a large and well-endowed Benedictine abbey.² Earl Hugh did not eject the *pauculos clericos*, as alleged by William of Malmesbury,³ but arranged that as the canons died their prebends should pass into the possession of the new monastery.⁴ The earl provided buildings suitable for monks and the nucleus of the new community was probably formed from the monks who had accompanied Anselm from Bec; Richard, the first abbot, was certainly a monk of Bec and, according to Higden, had been Anselm's chaplain.⁵ During his visit Anselm probably witnessed the original foundation charter and the gift of Weston upon Trent which Countess Ermentrude, on her husband's orders, placed on the altar of St. Werburgh and he later showed a paternal interest in the progress of the house and the activities of the monks. The founder himself became a monk three days before his death in 1101 and was buried in the graveyard of St. Werburgh's.⁶

The major endowments of the abbey are recorded in charters of confirmation by the first four earls of Chester. All four charters are irregular in form and it has been argued that they are forgeries. A more likely explanation is that these 'home-made' charters were based on a *historia* of the foundation and endowment of the house begun under the founder and continued, corrected, and amplified under his successors. Although several features of the charters are extremely suspicious, not least the very completeness of the series, the authenticity of the grants they record is unquestioned.⁷ The gifts of Earl Hugh I and his men are recorded in the charter known as *Sanctorum prisca* which is not a true foundation charter but rather a narrative of the foundation of the house and a confirmation of its endowments drawn up a few years before the founder's death.⁸ It has been estimated that before the death of Earl Hugh the house had been given as much new land as it inherited from the extinguished college of canons and in addition it had acquired a substantial income from tithes.⁹ As well as the gift of the Derbyshire estate of Weston upon Trent made by Countess Ermentrude at the foundation ceremony, Earl Hugh gave land in Chester, the manor of Irby in Wirral, two manors in Anglesey, one in Rhos (Denb.) and some land at Maltby (in Lindsey, Lincs.); the Welsh lands were quickly lost and the abbey does not

seem to have retained the Lincolnshire property beyond the later 13th century. In addition the founder gave the tithes of eleven of his demesne manors: Eaton, Frodsham, Eastham, Upton, and Weaverham in Cheshire; Hawarden, Coleshill, and Bistre (Flints.); Leek and Rocester (Staffs.); and Chipping Campden (Glos.). To these he added the tithes of the fisheries of Frodsham, Rhuddlan, Anglesey, and Eaton with the right to fishing boats in Anglesey and at Eaton. A later gift, probably after 1095, was the church and tithes of Denford (Northants.). In addition Earl Hugh granted extensive privileges to his new foundation: freedom from tolls and other services for all its possessions, the right to a court for its tenants, and the right to hold a three-day fair in Chester. The abbey also acquired the demesne tithes of Macclesfield.¹⁰ Earl Hugh and his wife encouraged their men to follow their example and give generously to the new foundation; they were licensed to give lands not exceeding 100s. in annual value and enjoined to bequeath their bodies for burial in the abbey accompanied by *post obit* gifts of a third of their goods. At least eighteen of Earl Hugh's tenants followed this advice and their gifts ranged from the grant by William Malbank of the manor of Whitby in Wirral, one-third of Wepre (Flints.), the church and tithes of Tattenhall and the tithes of Saughall, 'Clayton', and 'Yraduc' to a carucate of land in Macclesfield from Robert Pultrel. Among the more generous benefactors were Robert FitzHugh, Hugh and Ralph FitzNorman, Richard de Vernon, Richard de Rollos and Scirard, an ancestor of the Lancelyn family;¹¹ a notable absentee was William FitzNeal, who had shared Neston and Raby with the canons of St. Werburgh's and later effected an exchange with Abbot Richard by which he became the sole lord of Neston and the abbey of Raby.¹² By the death of Earl Hugh in 1101 the abbey had acquired, in addition to the gifts of Earl Hugh and his wife, the churches of Astbury, Coddington, Tattenhall, and Waverton, the chapels of Bebington and Christleton, tenements in Chester and lands at Bebington, Cotton Abbotts, Crewe (in Farndon), Greasby, Lostock Gralam, Macclesfield, Ness, Peckforton, Redcliff (in Chester), Tilstone Fearnall, Whitby, and Woodchurch, and at Broughton and Wepre (Flints.). Tithes were, however, the most popular form of benefaction and gifts included those of Ashton by Tarvin, Barnston (in Wirral), Lower Bebington, Blacon, Bramhall (in Wrenbury), Great Caldy, Clotton, Coddington, Greasby, Hatton, Lea Newbold, Ledsham, Picton, Prenton, Saughall, Storeton, Tattenhall, Wallasey, Waverton, Willaston (in Nantwich), and Worleston.¹³

The founder's son, Earl Richard, gave little to the abbey during his short tenure of the earldom; apart from the grant of a mill at Bache, his gifts were

¹ Ibid. pp. xix-xxi; *Dom. Surv. Ches.* (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxv), 93-101, 117-19, 127. Two of the holdings, in Neston and in Raby, were later described as ancient prebends: *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. xxii. Cf. *Life of St. Werburge*, 165.

² The traditional date of foundation is 1093: *Annales Cestrienses* (R.S.L.C. xiv), 16; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 15. It is clear, however, that the first steps were taken between Sept. and Dec. 1092: *Life of St. Anselm by Eadmer*, ed. R. W. Southern (1972 repr.), 63n.; *Mediaeval & Renaissance Studies*, iii, 87.

³ *Willelmi Malmesbiriensis de Gestis Regum* (Rolls Ser.), i, 267.

⁴ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 38.

⁵ Ibid. pp. xxiv-xxv, 16, 38; *Polychronicon Ran. Higden*, vii, 360.

⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. xxv.

⁷ Ibid. pp. xxxv-xliii, 22-8, 42-3, 50-1, 61-6.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 22-4; *Camb. Hist. Jnl.* iv, 219.

⁹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. xxv, 37.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 13-17, 30-1, 38-9; G. Barraclough, *Early Cheshire Charters*, 7-9.

¹¹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 17-21, 32-6.

¹² Ibid. p. 234.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 18-21, 32-7.

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restricted to the city and its suburbs.¹⁴ There was a tradition in the abbey that he quarrelled with the abbot over the manor at Saighton and that he 'intended to alter and change the foundation of the said abbey to another religion' but was only prevented by his providential death in the White Ship; there may be some substance to the story as the abbacy was left vacant during the last three years of Earl Richard's life.¹⁵ The flow of gifts to the abbey continued, however, from other benefactors: Hugh FitzNorman added the vill of Goostrey and Church Lawton to his earlier benefactions and William FitzNeal made a belated first gift of Newton (by Chester), reputedly as the result of a vow to St. Werburgh.¹⁶ At that period the house also acquired four more churches: St. Olave's, Chester, Northenden, Bodfari (Denb.), and Holywell (Flints.),¹⁷ salt houses in Nantwich and Fullwich, more tenements in Chester, and lands at Bebington, Hoole, Noctorum, Northenden, and Plumley; the last grant was made by Roger Mainwaring when his son became a monk, the first recorded example of a new recruit bringing a gift of land to the community.¹⁸ Four similar grants were made under Earl Ranulph I, including that of the church of Thurstaston in Wirral by Matthew of Rhuddlan when his brother became a monk.¹⁹ Among the more significant of the acquisitions confirmed by Ranulph I were the moiety of Lea Newbold given by William de Mold and the church of Dyserth near Rhuddlan given by the earl's brother, William le Meschin; the latter property was, however, later lost like most of the abbey's Welsh possessions.²⁰ Earl Ranulph himself made the important *post obit* gift of the manor of Upton to celebrate his removal of the body of the founder from the graveyard to the newly-completed chapter house.²¹ He also confirmed the founder's grant of a fair, extended the abbey's rights of jurisdiction during the fair, and emphasized the exclusive jurisdiction of the abbot's court by accepting its judgement in a case to which he was a party.²² Earl Ranulph II was a less consistent friend of the abbey than his father. A noted monastic benefactor, he solemnly confirmed the gifts of his predecessors and their men to St. Werburgh's and added of his own gift the church of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, several tenements in Chester, the monopoly of trade in Chester during the three days of the annual fair, a tenth of his revenues from the city, and the tithes of all his mills in Cheshire and of Leek mill (Staffs.); he also licensed Abbot Ralph and his successors to hunt stags and other wild animals throughout Cheshire.²³ Yet at his death in 1153 Ranulph II admitted that he had done great harm to the abbey and offered in compensation the valuable manors of Eastham and Bromborough.²⁴ He had certainly tried to enrich his new foundation at Basingwerk (Flints.) at the expense of St. Werburgh's;

Earl Hugh II restored to the monks of Chester the church of Holywell which Robert de Pierrepont had granted to Basingwerk with the consent of his lord, Ranulph II,²⁵ and he also confirmed their lease of West Kirby and its church from the abbey of Saint-Évroul (Orne) which had first been entered into by Abbot William but later nullified by Ranulph II's grant of West Kirby to Basingwerk.²⁶ Nor does Ranulph II appear to have encouraged his men to respect or to increase the possessions of the abbey. The grants made during his tenure of the earldom were few and meagre and Ralph de Mold, steward of Chester, granted the church of Neston in the late 1170s to atone for the injuries done to the abbey by himself and his predecessors, especially in Lea Newbold.²⁷ The flow of gifts of churches and lands began to diminish towards the end of the 12th century: Earl Hugh II gave the church of Prestbury, Simon FitzOsbern the church of St. Peter's, Chester, Alan de Boydell the churches of Handley and Dodleston, and Earl Ranulph III the church of Chipping Campden (Glos.) and the tithes of Rhuddlan (Flints.), thus completing the rich endowment of Chester abbey by the first five earls of Chester and their men.²⁸

Evidence of the internal state of the house and the progress of its buildings during its first century is sparse. The names of some of the monks who brought lands with them into the community have survived; among the humbler recruits were the priests Leofwine, Leofnoth, and William the Palmer, the services from whose lands Earl Hugh II relinquished to the abbey.²⁹ Henry Bradshaw has preserved the story of a pious and studious monk who was prevented by a vision of St. Werburgh from leaving the community to escape persecution by malicious and jealous fellow monks.³⁰ The prohibition of the withdrawal of monks from the abbey without the abbot's permission was one of the additional rights granted to the abbot and convent by Pope Clement III, together with the privilege of agreeing to requests for burial in the abbey, provided that the rights of the parish churches of the deceased were respected.³¹ The abbey appears to have become a popular burial place; in return for the grant of half of the church of Wallasey, William, son of Richard de Waley, and his wife and heirs were to be received into the fraternity of the abbey and be buried in its graveyard with his ancestors.³² These profitable burial rights were later threatened by the establishment of new religious communities in Chester and the monks were obliged, with the canons of St. John's, to protect their rights by entering into agreements with the nuns of St. Mary's, the brethren of St. John's Hospital, and the Dominican Friars.³³ In 1183 a colony of monks was sent to Ireland. John de Courcy gave ten carucates of land to the abbey in order that it should supply a

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 40, 43.

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. xxv-xxvi; *Life of St. Werburge*, 182-3; *Ann. Cestr.* 18.

¹⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 40, 43-4; *Life of St. Werburge*, 179-81.

¹⁷ The gifts of the Welsh churches were not permanent: *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 45; below.

¹⁸ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 40-1, 44-6.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 47-9.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 48, 51.

²¹ Ibid. pp. 47, 51.

²² Ibid. i, pp. 47-9.

²³ Ibid. pp. 52-3, 59, 70-1, 76, 88.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 231-3.

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 236-7. The church was lost to the Welsh by the early 13th cent. and never recovered.

²⁶ D. J. A. Matthew, *Norman Monasteries and their Eng. Possessions*, 53; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 289-96.

²⁷ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 51, 59, 120; ii, pp. 287, 302.

²⁸ Ibid. i, pp. 79-80, 92-3, 122, 138, 288-9; ii, p. 338.

²⁹ Ibid. i, p. 73.

³⁰ *Life of St. Werburge*, 177-9.

³¹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 109-11.

³² Ibid. ii, pp. 336, 455-6.

³³ Ibid. i, pp. 113-14; ii, pp. 299-302; below, Chester priory, Dominicans of Chester, and Hospital of St. John.

prior and monks to replace the secular canons whom he had expelled from the church of St. Patrick in Downpatrick; he stipulated, however, that the new cathedral priory should be free of any dependency on Chester.³⁴ One dependent cell had been established on Hilbre Island, a former hermitage which had been leased with West Kirby from Saint-Évroul; in the 1230s John the Scot, earl of Chester, granted 10s. from the exchequer of Chester for the light of St. Mary in the chapel of Hilbre to the monks living there. There were still two monks on the island in the 16th century.³⁵ During the 12th century the Anglo-Saxon church was rebuilt and much of the resources of the house must have been devoted to the cost.³⁶ At the accession of Abbot Robert II in 1175 most of the abbey's income from tithes was assigned to the fabric (*ad propectum operis ecclesie*) and he added, with the consent of the convent, the income from further property, including the church of Bebington, half the church of Wallasey, and a pension of 10s. from the church of Chipping Campden. Bishop Peche licensed the abbey to increase the pensions due from its churches and chapels when vacant.³⁷ Robert died in August 1184 leaving the abbacy vacant. During the next six months the custodians received a total of £81 19s. 7d. from the lands of the abbey, including £4 9s. 1d. in profits from manorial courts, and spent £21 12s. 6d. on food for the monks and other domestic expenses in the abbey, £6 9s. on the monks' clothing, and £5 10s. 4d. on the wages and food of the servants on the abbey's manors.³⁸ The vacancy was ended by the appointment in 1186 of Robert of Hastings, a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury and a partisan of Archbishop Baldwin.³⁹ His appointment was not popular with the monks of Chester; the general confirmation of possessions and privileges obtained from Clement III contained a provision for the orderly election of abbots and in 1194, after protracted litigation, Robert of Hastings' rival, Geoffrey, obtained the abbacy with the help of Earl Ranulph III and at the price of a pension of 20 marks a year for Hastings.⁴⁰

It was probably in Abbot Geoffrey's time that Lucian, a monk of St. Werburgh's, wrote his description of Chester, *De Laude Cestrie*, which contains, in addition to some fulsome praise of the virtue and learning of the monks, an account of the hospitality provided both to fellow religious and to travellers: 'The seats about their table are worn by reason of the many meals given to strangers, such is their innate liberality. Here travellers to and from Ireland find rest, companionship and shelter while waiting for wind and

tide.'⁴¹ The costs of hospitality and almsgiving must have been a considerable burden but also, like the costs of building, a stimulus to the development of a more elaborate internal administration. Over a long period portions of the abbey's revenues came to be ear-marked for particular purposes. In the second half of the 12th century provision was made for the fabric fund and pensions totalling £16 5s. from eleven of the abbey's churches and chapels were reserved to meet the costs of clothing the monks.⁴² Separate provision was also made for hospitality and almsgiving: in 1188 Clement III licensed the abbey to devote the revenues of the churches of Eastham, Neston, and Aston upon Trent to the support of the monks, their guests, and the poor, and early in the 12th century the appropriation of the churches of Shotwick and Prestbury was licensed to enable the house and that of Ince to give better hospitality to the poor and indigent.⁴³ Earl Ranulph III not only provided a house in each of his manors for the monks themselves when they attended his courts but also made additional grants of money for almsgiving and the feeding of 100 poor people in the abbey on his father's anniversary.⁴⁴ At that period the cook was a layman who held lands in Chester, Newton, and Lea in return for finding a master cook in the abbey kitchen and who also had the right to perquisites from its abundant provisions.⁴⁵ In his description of the abbey Lucian gives few concrete details of its administration apart from a rather high-flown account of the duties of the abbot, prior and subprior,⁴⁶ but the administration apparently became more complex during the 13th century. The growth of an obediensary system can be traced in the assignment by the abbot and convent of the revenues from churches or pieces of property to particular funds or departments and the grants of new property, usually by citizens of Chester, to specific offices. The development appears to have been slow and haphazard and the surviving visitation records for the 14th century reveal that the system needed adjustment and supervision. At various times in the late 12th century and the 13th mention is made of the wardrobe, chamber, kitchen, refectory, almonry, infirmary, sacristy, library, and fabric, each with its own fund or holding of property.⁴⁷ The abbot had a separate household and table and by 1300 the proceeds of a small group of properties in Chester had been assigned to the abbot's chamber.⁴⁸ When Abbot Walter of Pinchbeck (1228-40) added six monks to the establishment he assigned the revenues from the church of Shotwick to the convent kitchen and when his successor Abbot Roger Frend (1240-9) increased the

³⁴ A. Gwynn & R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses, Ireland*, 105; *Cart. Chester Abey*, ii, pp. 471-2; *Ann. Cestr.* 28.

³⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 289, 298-9; *Life of St. Werburge*, 180; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* (R.S.L.C. lxxviii), 231; 3 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 6-7.

³⁶ R. V. H. Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 5, 207; G. G. Scott, 'On the Archit. Hist. of Chester Cath.', *J.C.A.S.* [1st ser.] pt. iii, pp. 167-8.

³⁷ G. Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chart.* 7-9; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 126.

³⁸ *Ches. in Pipe R.* 15-16, 24-5.

³⁹ *Gervasii Cantuariensis Opera Historica* (Rolls Ser.), i, 335-6; *Ann. Cestr.* 34.

⁴⁰ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 111; *Ann. Cestr.* 44.

⁴¹ *Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie* (R.S.L.C. lxiv), 9-10, 57-9; *Mediaeval Cheshire* (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxviii), 68.

⁴² *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 252-3.

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 115-16, 131, 133-4; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 23-4.

⁴⁴ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 96, 211-12, 247.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* ii, pp. 257, 343-4, 352-5. The perquisites were released at the end of the 13th cent. when the service was commuted to a money rent: *ibid.* pp. 352-5.

⁴⁶ *Liber Luciani*, 70-2. The emphasis given to the subprior suggests that Lucian may have held that office: *ibid.* 10-11.

⁴⁷ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 72, 90-1, 122, 132, 249, 255-6; ii, pp. 258-71, 273-5, 277, 281-3; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 36-7; *Ch. in Chester, 1300-1540* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. vii), 82-3; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 49-52.

⁴⁸ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 119; ii, pp. 339-52, 471; *1st Reg. Stretton*, 137.

number of monks to 40 he assigned the chapel of Wervin to the kitchen and made additional grants to the chamber and infirmary and to the prior and sacrist.⁴⁹ There was in addition a separate fund known as the charities of the monks which was augmented in the 13th century by citizens of Chester and by various abbots who endowed celebrations on feast days and anniversaries.⁵⁰ The fund was regulated after a visitation in 1323: two monks were to be chosen to distribute necessities to the monks 'out of the money set aside for the use of the brethren'.⁵¹ The injunctions issued after visitations in the 14th century provide further details of the operation of the obedientiary system. In 1315 it was ordered that the officers of the house should be appointed in chapter in accordance with custom and that the abbot should surrender the money which he had received for the fabric; in 1323 all office-holders were ordered to render annual accounts and five officers, the subprior, the subcellarer, the subsacrist, the almoner, and the keeper of the fabric and kitchen, were dismissed for incompetence or dishonesty.⁵² Offices seem to have been rotated briskly among the members of the convent and the number, and even the names, of offices seem to have varied from year to year: in 1379 mention is found of a prior, subprior and sacrist, third prior, infirmarer, master of works, kitchen, refector, almoner, and cellarer and in 1382 of a prior, subprior, infirmarian, kitchen, almoner, cellarer, precentor, and chamberlain.⁵³ There was also continuing flexibility in the 14th century in the financing of departments; in 1340 the church of Chipping Campden was appropriated and its revenues assigned to the cellarer but when, in 1379, a chantry was established for the souls of Abbot William Bebington and Abbot Thomas Newport the cellarer was ordered to pay the wages of the chantry monks from the revenues and also pay 20s. to the almoner on the anniversary of Abbot Thomas's death for the provision of alms for the poor and wine for the monks.⁵⁴ After his metropolitan visitation in 1400 Archbishop Arundel attempted to reform this confused system by ordering the establishment of a central fund; two treasurers were to be elected annually to distribute the revenues of the house to the office-holders and with the obedientiaries to render quarterly accounts to the abbot and a committee of four.⁵⁵ Little more is known of the administrative system of the abbey in the late Middle Ages but a custodian of the works is found collecting rents and tithes directly in the later 15th century.⁵⁶ In 1518 the abbot employed a secular clerk to arrange music for services in the abbey and to teach singing and organ-playing to the monks and instruct six boy choristers.⁵⁷

The fortunes of the abbey in the 13th and early 14th

centuries fluctuated and were affected both by the ability of individual abbots and by political events. After the rapid expansion of the community and the development of the administration in the earlier 13th century there were setbacks during the period of baronial rebellion when the disgruntled heirs of benefactors and others took advantage of the lack of strong central authority to challenge and attack the privileges and property of the house;⁵⁸ its fortunes revived, however, under the long and vigorous rule of Abbot Simon Whitchurch (1265–91) and his successor, Thomas Birchills (1291–1323).⁵⁹ Although there were few new major endowments at that period many small properties were given particularly in Chester and its neighbourhood and especially during the abbacy of Simon Whitchurch.⁶⁰ Many of those grants were made to specified departments or for the endowment of chantries in the abbey or elsewhere; the vill of Chelford, perhaps the most important acquisition of the 13th century, was given by Robert de Worth in 1267 in return for the provision of a chantry chaplain to celebrate at Chelford or at Chelford and Prestbury⁶¹ and John Arneway, mayor of Chester, who died in 1278, gave property in Chester and its neighbourhood in return for burial in the abbey and the establishment of chantries in St. Bridget's, Chester and at the altar of St. Leonard in the abbey church.⁶² In addition the holdings of the abbey in Cheshire and Derbyshire were consolidated by additional small grants from lesser landholders, by exchange, and by purchase.⁶³ Agreements were concluded during the 13th century with other religious houses, such as Stanlow, Dieulacres (Staffs.), Rocester (Staffs.), Combermere, and Vale Royal, concerning exchanges of tithes and other property and the settlement of disputed boundaries.⁶⁴ The abbey's hold on its property and its relations with the heirs of benefactors and other religious houses were disturbed by the unsettled political conditions after 1258. Sir Roger de Mold, justice of Chester, attempted to deprive the house of its right of presentation to Neston church which had been given by his ancestors; in 1258 he forced a one-sided settlement on the abbey by which it lost Broughton, near Hawarden (Flints.) and on account of which, according to the abbey's chronicler, de Mold met with a succession of misfortunes.⁶⁵ Two other incidents at that period also aroused the annalist's indignation: in 1259 Roger Venables challenged the abbey's right to the advowson of Astbury church and began a long legal dispute which was not finally settled in the abbey's favour until 1299,⁶⁶ and in 1264 William de la Zouch, justice of Chester, destroyed the abbey's gardens and some of its houses while defending the city for the king.⁶⁷ In the latter case it took the abbey eleven years to secure

⁴⁹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 259–60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* i, pp. 237–46, 249–51.

⁵¹ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 70.

⁵² *Ibid.* 67, 69–70. ⁵³ *Ibid.* 99.

⁵⁴ *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 166–7; *2nd Reg. Stretton*, 136–7.

⁵⁵ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 117.

⁵⁶ P.R.O., SC 12/21/26, ff. 75–6.

⁵⁷ John Rylands Libr., Latin MS. 460, f. 21.

⁵⁸ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. xxvi; below.

⁵⁹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. xxvi–xxvii; E. K. McConnell, 'Abbey of St. Werburgh in the 13th Cent.', *T.H.S.L.C.* iv, 49.

⁶⁰ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 49–52; 26 D.K.R. 52; P.R.O., C 143/82/12; *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 145, 398; 1330–4, 12.

⁶¹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. xxvii, 320–2. At the dissolution £4 6s. 8d. was being paid to a priest serving at Chelford: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 276.

⁶² *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 463–4, 468–70; *Ann. Cestr.* 107. See also *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 278–9, 314.

⁶³ e.g. *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 144–176; ii, pp. xxvi, 308–12, 394–406.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* i, pp. 195–202, 206–9; ii, pp. 279, 283–5, 406–7; *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 117; *Cal. Close*, 1288–96, 170.

⁶⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 304–7; *Ann. Cestr.* 74, 76.

⁶⁶ *Ann. Cestr.* 76, 78; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 8–9, 21, 129–30; *T.H.S.L.C.* iv. 52; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 218–21.

⁶⁷ *Ann. Cestr.* 86, 88.

compensation and in other disputes, such as that between St. Werburgh's and Basingwerk Abbey in the 1280s over the advowson of the church of West Kirby, the civil wars had long-lasting effects.⁶⁸ Abbot Simon Whitchurch and Abbot Thomas Birchills were obliged to be vigilant defenders of the interests of the abbey and constant and resourceful litigants, though they did not always succeed in defending the rights of their house against the disgruntled heirs of benefactors.⁶⁹ On occasion victory was costly: the renunciation by Sir Philip Burnell and his wife of their claim to the manors of Saughton, Huntington, Cheveley, and Boughton cost the monks £200, met by the establishment of a chantry in the abbey.⁷⁰ As well as defending the spiritual possessions of the monastery by litigation, the monks exploited them; by the end of the 13th century five churches had been appropriated and pensions had been secured from those which had not yet been appropriated.⁷¹ Much of the income obtained from the spiritualities of the house and from the exploitation of its demesne lands must have been devoted to the building works then undertaken although apart from some grants of rents and tithes to the fabric fund,⁷² the works are poorly documented. The architectural style of surviving portions of the church and conventual buildings suggests that the cloisters, the refectory, and the chapter house, slype, and parlour with the dormitory above were rebuilt in the mid 13th century and that Abbot Simon built the Lady Chapel and began the rebuilding of the presbytery; the new presbytery and St. Werburgh's shrine were probably completed in the time of Abbot Birchills.⁷³ Major building works were certainly in progress in 1277 when the abbot and convent sent 100 workmen to help with the king's works at Flint and in 1284 Edward I made a gift of venison for the support of the monks occupied 'on the great work of the building of the church'.⁷⁴ In 1278 and 1283 Abbot Simon was given permission to improve the abbey's water supply by piping water from Newton and Christleton through the city wall.⁷⁵

The abbey came into closer contact with the Crown on the lapse of the earldom of Chester in 1237. Henry III continued a payment of £3 a year to support a chantry chaplain celebrating in the abbey for the soul of Earl Ranulph III and also continued to allow the abbey the tithe of the issues of the city of Chester and of its mills and fishery;⁷⁶ by 1300 the 'ancient alms' due to the abbey had been fixed at £19 10s., compris-

ing £10 for the tithe of the issues of the city; £5 for the tithe of the Dee fishery; £4 in compensation for tithes from Frodsham transferred to Vale Royal and 10s. for the light in Hilbre chapel.⁷⁷ The abbey still claimed, and was allowed, the tithes of all venison taken in Cheshire but in 1285 Abbot Simon agreed to a restriction of the extensive hunting rights in Cheshire granted by Ranulph II;⁷⁸ in addition the abbey was allowed the right of free warren on most of its demesne lands.⁷⁹ The Crown used the abbey occasionally as a safe deposit for money from Ireland and from the 1290s regularly appointed royal servants to corrodies;⁸⁰ in return Abbot Simon was granted permission in the 1280s to buy food for the abbey overseas and his servants were put under royal protection when they took the abbey's wool to Boston fair.⁸¹ Relations were less harmonious over the question of the rights of the Crown during a vacancy in the abbacy. Nothing was taken during vacancies in 1241 and 1249 but there was a dispute when Simon Whitchurch was elected abbot in April 1265 at the height of the civil wars. The justice of Chester, Luke de Tanai, delayed the admission of the new abbot for three weeks while he wasted the abbey's goods; in May Simon de Montfort ordered the restitution of everything taken during the vacancy and himself invested the abbot with the temporalities of the house. This assumption of authority infuriated the Lord Edward who denied Abbot Simon access to the abbey until August when he relented and handed over the goods and revenues of the house.⁸² On a visit to Chester in 1283 Edward I swore to preserve the liberties of St. Werburgh but that did not prevent his taking the revenues into his own hands for three months on the death of Abbot Simon in 1291 and demanding a pension of £5 for a royal clerk; that was the usual practice during vacancies in abbeys held of the Crown. The revenues were restored and the pension cancelled after an inquisition established that in previous vacancies the Crown had only taken the expenses of a sergeant and two subkeepers, one at the gate and the other in the cellar, placed in the abbey to safeguard its goods and revenues during the vacancy; in 1292 Edward I formally renounced his claims to any further rights during vacancies.⁸³ Relations between the abbey and the city authorities were generally amicable at that period, although the city challenged the abbey during the later Middle Ages over its claim to extensive jurisdiction within the city, its highly privileged fair and other trading rights, and

⁶⁸ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* i, pp. 127-8; *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 104-5; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 213; ii, pp. xxxiii, 294-6; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 56, 59-61.

⁶⁹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 196-209; ii, pp. xxvii, 323-4, 329-31, 379-82, 385-6, 403, 453-4, 475-7; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 15, 35-6, 38-9, 65, 72-3, 97, 136; 3 *Sheaf*, x, p. 27; *T.H.S.L.C.* lv. 47-9.

⁷⁰ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 222-5.

⁷¹ *Ch. in Chester*, 66-7; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 44-6, 202; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 120-1, 129-30, 253; above.

⁷² *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 273-5, 277, 281-3.

⁷³ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 27-9, 43-4, 57-60.

⁷⁴ *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 226; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 252.

⁷⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 225-7; *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 279; 1281-92, 75.

⁷⁶ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226-57, 169; *Cal. Lib.* 1226-40, 350, 495-6; 1245-51, 131, 349; 1251-60, 76; *Close R.* 1242-7, 382. The yearly payment of £3 from Newcastle-under-Lyme was still being made at the dissolution: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 276.

⁷⁷ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 71; *Ch. in Chester*, 71-72;

Ches. in Pipe R. 184; *Cal. Fine R.* 1272-1307, 429. Payments were often in arrears in 14th cent.: *Cal. Fine R.* 1272-1307, 6; 1327-37, 113-14; *Cal. Close*, 1318-23, 254; *Cal. Pat.* 1338-40, 31. Nevertheless they were still being received at the dissolution: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 276.

⁷⁸ *Close R.* 1242-7, 338, 340-1; *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 210, 402; 1279-88, 199; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 292; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 90-1.

⁷⁹ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226-57, 277; 1257-1300, 460.

⁸⁰ *Cal. Lib.* 1245-51, 370; 1251-60, 152; *Cal. Close*, 1288-96, 383; 1307-13, 580; 1313-18, 437, 596; 1323-7, 224; 1333-7, 95.

⁸¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 457; 1281-92, 25, 32, 65, 70, 128, 136, 138, 232.

⁸² *Ann. Cestr.* 92-6; *Close R.* 1237-42, 302; 1247-51, 204, 206, 272.

⁸³ *Ann. Cestr.* 112; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 87; *Rot. Parl.* i. 80-1, 89; 3 *Sheaf*, xxvi, p. 54; *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 471, 479. The renunciation was cited in 1365 and 1443: *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 485; *Cal. Pat.* 1441-6, 177.

its position near the city walls. Disputes arose in 1289 over fairs⁸⁴ and over courts for the abbey's tenants,⁸⁵ and in 1322 over the defences of the city;⁸⁶ both sides, however, were willing to compromise, perhaps because the abbey's position in the city was so strong. It was intimately connected with the city in another way as many of the inhabitants of Chester were not only tenants of the abbey but also worshipped in its church. The original parish church of St. Werburgh's, the altarage of which, with its dependent chapels of Bruera and Wervin, was appropriated to the abbey in the early 13th century, became known as St. Oswald's from the name of the altar at which its vicar officiated in the nave of the abbey church. In the second half of the 13th century the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield decided that the parishioners of the altar of St. Oswald should be responsible for repairing the wall, windows, and roof of the 'nave aisle' of the abbey church and enclosing their cemetery which adjoined it.⁸⁷ At some point in the later Middle Ages, possibly in the mid 14th century, the parishioners were moved out of the abbey church into the chapel of St. Nicholas which stood in the south-west corner of the precinct. In 1488 the abbot and convent agreed to share with the mayor and parishioners the cost of completing an extension to St. Nicholas's chapel, otherwise known as 'the new church of St. Oswald'.⁸⁸ The move seems only to have been temporary, connected with the rebuilding of the nave, and shortly before the dissolution the parishioners of St. Oswald's moved back into the abbey church, this time into the south transept.⁸⁹

Evidence about the internal state of the monastery becomes more plentiful from the beginning of the 14th century. In 1379 27 monks, including the abbot, were listed for taxation purposes and it has been calculated that there were 28 monks in the house at its dissolution.⁹⁰ Those numbers were rather below the total of 40 monks for which provision was made in the 13th century and the abbot of Tewkesbury, who visited the house on behalf of the Provincial Chapter in the 1390s, reported that its numbers were insufficient but that the abbot's proctor had promised to reform the matter.⁹¹ The names of the monks which have survived in ordination lists and other sources suggest that the majority of the recruits in the later Middle Ages came from Cheshire or Shropshire or from the manors of the house and were of relatively humble origin, although a Robert Venables, 'of noble race', obtained a papal dispensation to hold a benefice in 1442.⁹² Although the endowments of the house were not significantly increased after 1300,⁹³ they sufficed to maintain the inmates and to pay for continued building; any financial problems were due to the incompetent or dishonest management of resources rather than to their

inadequacy.⁹⁴ During the declining years of Abbot Birchills the house was visited on behalf of the bishop in 1315 and 1323 and the injunctions issued thereafter reveal concern that the superior was extravagant and not acting in the best interests of the house.⁹⁵ In 1315 he was rebuked for having too many personal servants, holding too many feasts, eating meat on fish days with a few favourite monks in his own apartments, and using the convent's money to buy legal books; in future he was to take the advice of the *major et sanior pars* of the convent on important matters and no corrodies were to be granted or sold without the consent of the whole chapter. In 1323 the abbot was again rebuked for showing favouritism and laxity in controlling his servants. He was too old to hear confession and, in view of his bodily weakness, the prior and cellarer, who behaved with commendable austerity, were appointed his co-adjutors in the government of the house. In spite of the abbot's declining powers the abbey does not appear to have been generally undisciplined and compares favourably with other houses at that period. In 1315 three monks who had been undisciplined were transferred to other houses and in 1323 three more who had been accused of incontinence and violence were confined to the abbey until the charges against them were proved or dismissed and one of them was forbidden to talk to any woman except in the presence of a senior member of the convent. Concern was shown that the monastic enclosure should be observed: in 1315 the prior was forbidden to hunt and monks living on the abbey's manors were recalled, and in 1323 it was ordered that no monk was to leave the abbey except with special permission and a fellow monk of good reputation as a companion; at least one monk, however, was to be sent to Hilbre Island to support Brother Robert of Marketon who had unwisely vowed to become an anchorite. Within the monastery no fashionable clothes were to be worn and no individual allowances were to be given for clothes as some monks had attempted to show their superior status by their dress. There was to be no drinking after compline, silence was enjoined in the refectory and any left-overs were to be distributed to the poor and not used to feed the greyhounds and other hunting dogs which the visitors noted with disapproval both in 1315 and 1323. Hunting remained popular with the monks and, although the abbot was persuaded to reduce his allowance of game from Delamere Forest in 1351 and relinquish his hunting rights in Cheshire entirely in 1354, the full entitlement to game and coursing rights granted to the abbey by Edward I was confirmed once more in 1425.⁹⁶ Despite the visitors' concern about the monks' extra-mural activities and preoccupation with fashion-

⁸⁴ *Cal. Chester. Co. Ct. R.* 122-3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 159; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 42-3, 146.

⁸⁶ B.L. Harl. MS. 2057, f. 147v.; 27 D.K.R. 119.

⁸⁷ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, pp. 117-19.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* i, pp. xviii-xix; *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 91, 134-5; 3 *Sheaf.* xxi, p. 52; B.L. Harl. MS. 2103, f. 25; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 136-9. In 1345 the church of St. Oswald was said to be under the roof of the abbey; in 1348 papal exemption was obtained for the altar of St. Oswald, its cemetery and the newly-founded chapel of St. Nicholas: *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 91, 134-5.

⁸⁹ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 139.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 99-100, 179-81; M. J. Bennett, 'Lancs. and Ches. Clergy, 1379', *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 22. Lists for 1377 (20), 1379 (26), 1382 (24) probably do not include novices or are

otherwise incomplete: Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 179. 26 monks were taxed in 1381: *Traditio*, ii. 189.

⁹¹ *Chapters of Eng. Black Monks*, ii (Camd. 3rd ser. xlvii), 92.

⁹² *Cal. Papal Reg.* ix. 272; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 100; *Ch. in Chester*, 27; Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/1, f. 56v.

⁹³ Only a handful of new but small acquisitions are recorded in the 14th cent.: *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 38; iii. 2, 21, 125, 185-6, 402.

⁹⁴ *Ch. in Chester*, 78-81.

⁹⁵ For what follows see Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 66-8, 69-70.

⁹⁶ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 13, 37, 131-2, 148-9; *Cal. Pat.* 1422-8, 276. Monks were sometimes accused of unlawful hunting: P.R.O., CHES 25/8, rot. 17d.; 25/17, rot. 1d.

able clothing the abbey remained a centre of intellectual activity. In 1323 the obedientaries who were dismissed for incompetence were ordered to devote themselves once more to reading in the cloister.⁹⁷ There was presumably a considerable library at their disposal. The librarian, *custos almarioli librorum*, who was allotted a rent charge of 4s. at the beginning of the 13th century, maintained a collection which, to judge from Lucian's work, must have contained several classical authors, such as Ovid, Seneca, and Virgil; in 1347 the collection was augmented by a bequest of over 20 volumes from Richard of Chester, a canon of York minster.⁹⁸ During the visitations of 1315 and 1323 Ranulph Higden was at work on his *Polychronicon*, St. Werburgh's 'greatest contribution to medieval learning'. There is no evidence that Higden, who probably died early in 1364 after living 64 years in religion, went outside the abbey for his education and he displays in his works a certain local patriotism. His *Polychronicon*, which was probably based partially on a small collection of annals produced at St. Werburgh's in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, was an immediate success and in 1352 he was summoned to Westminster with his chronicles to advise the king and his council.⁹⁹ After the death of the exceptional Higden the abbey achieved little intellectual distinction apart from the Chester miracle plays doubtfully attributed to Henry Francis, a monk of Chester, and Henry Bradshaw's poetry at the beginning of the 16th century.¹ In 1423 it was reported to the Provincial Chapter that the abbot had sent no scholars to university for twelve years and it was decided to punish him severely for such negligence.²

Although there were few faults in the administration and discipline of the house in the early 14th century which could not have been dealt with by an able superior, the attentions of the visitors were probably unwelcome. It was probably to avoid interference from the conscientious Bishop Roger Northburgh and his officials that Abbot William Bebington sought papal exemption from episcopal visitation and thus began more than a century of internal faction and misrule. In 1344 he obtained a papal indult to use the pastoral staff, ring, and mitre, together with a licence to exercise episcopal and archidiaconal jurisdiction over his servants and the parishioners of St. Oswald's, and in the following year he obtained the exemption from ordinary, archiepiscopal, and archidiaconal jurisdiction of the abbey and St. Oswald's, which became immediately subject to the papacy.³ His opponents later alleged that Bebington was scheming to avoid correction by the bishop 'so that he might give himself up to dissolute living' and that he and his party in the abbey did not obtain the consent of the whole

convent or the permission of the abbey's patron, the Black Prince.⁴ Opposition to the abbot was led by four monks who were said to be among the older members of the house and to be concerned about both the financial cost of the exemption and the potential spiritual damage to the house.⁵ Since the exemption denied them the right to complain to the bishop, they sought the help of the Black Prince and his father; in 1346 the abbot was summoned before the king and his council and in the following year the Black Prince asked the abbots of Westminster and Chertsey to give temporary refuge to the four monks who were bringing a case against their abbot and who did not dare go near their own house until it was finished.⁶ The factional dispute disrupted the administration of the house and in August 1347 the Black Prince, on the advice of his father, appointed four keepers to help the abbot govern the abbey with the advice of three or four monks who were 'not too favourable to the abbot'.⁷ Two of the keepers were ordered to examine each member of the convent in secret on the matter of the exemption and report to the prince.⁸ No further action was taken by the secular powers and in July 1348 Abbot William obtained papal protection from deposition and sequestration by any bishop.⁹ The episode left a legacy of bitterness: one of the four ringleaders was transferred to Birkenhead Priory and another was said in 1351 to be apostate and wandering; when Abbot William died, probably in 1349, the convent bound itself by oath to secure the revocation of the exemption before electing Richard Sainsbury as his successor.¹⁰ Sainsbury was prevented by the war with France from securing immediate confirmation of his election from the pope and made his oath of obedience to the archbishop of Canterbury; he later claimed that the archbishop proceeded to interfere in the administration of the house.¹¹ He secured papal confirmation and rehabilitation in 1352 and in 1354 was given royal permission to go to Rome where Innocent VI was asked to revoke the exemption and return the abbey to the jurisdiction of the ordinary.¹² The petition was not granted but the revocation was obtained in 1363 from Urban V on the petition of the Black Prince, the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Abbot Thomas Newport, and the convent; that revocation was in its turn revoked by Boniface IX who renewed both the exemption and papal protection 'to meet the persecution to which exemption of the monastery exposed the abbot'. The abbey remained exempt from episcopal visitation for the rest of its existence.¹³

The abbacy of Richard Sainsbury was turbulent and ended with the re-opening of divisions within the convent and his forced resignation. He was obliged to

⁹⁷ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 69.

⁹⁸ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts*, 37; J. Taylor, *The 'Universal Chronicle' of Ranulph Higden*, 10; N. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (2nd edn.), 49–50.

⁹⁹ Taylor, *'Universal Chronicle'*, 1–3, 9, 11, 62–63; Cal. Close, 1349–54, 499; J. G. Edwards, 'Ranulph, Monk of Chester', *E.H.R.* xlvii, 94.

¹ Taylor, *'Universal Chronicle'*, 7, 9–10; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 101; F. M. Salter, *Mediaeval Drama in Chester* (Toronto, 1955), 33; *Life of St. Werburge*, p. vi; 3 *Sheaf*, xxiv, p. 77.

² *Chapters of Eng. Black Monks*, ii (Camd. 3rd ser. xlvii), p. 150.

³ Cal. Papal Pets. i. 82, 91; Cal. Papal Reg. iii. 175.

⁴ Cal. Pat. 1345–8, 363; Cal. Papal Pets. i. 274.

⁵ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 110–11; *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 274.

⁶ Cal. Close, 1343–6, 58; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 104–5, 107. In Aug. 1347 they were taken into royal protection for a year: *Cal. Pat.* 1345–8, 363.

⁷ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 110–11.

⁸ *Ibid.* 112–13.

⁹ *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 38, 302.

¹⁰ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 155; P.R.O., C 81/1786/8; *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 354–5.

¹¹ *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 354–5.

¹² *Ibid.* 274; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 468; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 175, 178; *Cal. Pat.* 1354–8, 100, 106.

¹³ *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 423; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 88, 451–2; *1st Reg. Stretton*, 156–7, 163; *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/3, f. 140a.

take vigorous action to protect the rights and privileges of his house and in doing so he aroused much hostility. He inherited expensive building works as the rebuilding of the church had continued after the death of Abbot Birchills. When the abbot and convent first petitioned the bishop of Worcester for permission to appropriate their church of Chipping Campden, probably early in the 1330s, they explained that they had recently rebuilt the choir from its foundations and intended to continue with the nave and the bell tower which was ruined and dangerous; they complained that with losses caused by the Welsh wars and by flooding their resources were insufficient to maintain hospitality and pay for the building work.¹⁴ Abbot Sainsbury continued, but was unable to complete, the rebuilding of the nave and the enlargement of the south transept. There is little surviving evidence of the progress or cost of this building work but in 1354 Sainsbury obtained letters of protection from impressment into the service of the Black Prince for twelve of the carpenters, masons, and other workmen who were then continuously working on the church.¹⁵ After his resignation, however, the church and houses of the abbey were said urgently to need repair and his successor was permitted to employ six masons, a quarryman, and four stone-workers.¹⁶ Abbot Sainsbury continued the policy of his three predecessors in exploiting the demesne lands of the abbey by felling timber and inclosing and cultivating large areas of waste; in pursuing the policy he frequently encountered the opposition of the officials of the Black Prince and found that their master was not prepared to allow the abbey's claims to freedom from the operation of forest law without question.¹⁷ In general the prince and his council did not look kindly on the abbot's activities and were prepared to allow only such claims to privileges as he could substantiate by producing charters; in the course of a long-drawn-out dispute over the approvement of waste at Rudheath the abbot was reminded that 'no right can accrue from wrongful encroachments'.¹⁸ There was another protracted quarrel on the question of the abbey's liability to contribute to the repair of the Dee Bridge with the prince repeatedly questioning its claim to be free of all secular demands;¹⁹ in a similar dispute in 1351 over the repair of a sluice between the abbey's manor of Ince and the prince's manor of Frodsham the abbot was forced to

capitulate and pay half the cost of reconstructing it and maintaining it in repair.²⁰ Abbot Richard also had to face attacks by the prince's officials and by the city authorities on his claims to jurisdiction in Chester.²¹ On several occasions the abbot or his officials were accused of attempting to settle disputes with their tenants or the prince's forest officials by violence.²² In 1361 Thomas Newport, later abbot, instigated two of the monks to attack Abbot Sainsbury in his own chamber, giving the Black Prince and his council the opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of the abbey.²³ In February 1362 the prince requested a visitation of the abbey and in March he took into his protection three of the monks, two of whom had been involved in the attack on Sainsbury.²⁴ At the same time the sheriff and escheator were ordered to take the administration of the abbey's property out of the abbot's hands and to hand over the common seal of the house, under the prince's own seal, to the convent for safe-keeping.²⁵ Before the beginning of May Thomas de la Mare, abbot of St. Albans and president of the Provincial Chapter, had visited Chester; he forced Abbot Sainsbury, whom he found guilty of dilapidation, encouragement of vice, and mockery of the Rule, to resign and made suitable provision for him from the goods of the house; with the consent of the bishop and the monks he chose another superior and temporarily removed some of the monks to St. Albans at his own expense to be instructed in regular observance and taught to live peacefully with their fellows.²⁶ In appointing a new abbot de la Mare exceeded his powers. Apparently Sainsbury claimed papal protection but offered to resign his office to the pope. The next abbot, Thomas Newport, was not installed until autumn 1363 after he had obtained papal provision to his office and the revocation of the bull of exemption. In addition the Black Prince forced the community to purge its contempt in choosing a new abbot without his permission.²⁷ In May 1362 he had taken the prior and convent into his protection and committed the administration of the house to Sir John Delves, the lieutenant of the justice of Chester, and to one of the monks, with full power to remove the officials of the house for negligence or dishonesty.²⁸ Richard Sainsbury continued to dispute his resignation until 1374 or later.²⁹

By the end of the 14th century the state of the house

¹⁴ B.L. Harl. MS. 2148, f. 3. These documents seem more likely to be connected with the licence to appropriate the church obtained from the Crown in 1332 (*Cal. Pat.* 1330-4, 261) and the abortive offer to alienate the abbey's half of the church of Wallasey to Birkenhead Priory (*Cal. Pat.* 1327-30, 512) than with negotiations for appropriation in the early 13th cent. as argued in Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 12; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 14-15. The A., Bp. of Worcester, addressed (B.L. Harl. MS. 2148, f. 3) was probably Adam Orleton (1327-33). When the appropriation was finally effected by Bp. Bransford in 1340 and confirmed by the pope in 1348 it was on almost identical grounds: *Reg. Bransford* (Worcs. Hist. Soc. N.S. iv), 69-70; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 166-7.

¹⁵ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 148-9; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 77-8, 90-1.

¹⁶ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 461.

¹⁷ *Mediaeval Ches.* (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxxviii), 13, 22, 30, 91; *Cal. Fine R.* 1327-37, 351; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 17, 34, 49-50, 83, 286-7; 36 D.K.R. 514; T.H.S.L.C. ci. 42-3.

¹⁸ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 2, 21-22, 32, 88, 105, 108, 125, 132, 140, 148-9, 244, 264, 266, 274, 286-8, 360, 363, 390-1; 36 D.K.R. 515; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 285-8.

¹⁹ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* i. 13, 37-8; iii. 15, 19, 87-8; R.

Stewart-Brown, 'Old Dee Bridge at Chester', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxx(2), 70-2.

²⁰ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 7, 17-18, 21-22, 31-2; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* (R.S.L.C. lix), 165.

²¹ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 132, 146, 360-1, 400.

²² *Cal. Pat.* 1354-8, 386, 397; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 401; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 85-6.

²³ P.R.O., CHES 25/4, rot. 20.

²⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 438, 441.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 440.

²⁶ *Charters of Eng. Black Monks*, iii (Camd. 3rd ser. liv), 34; *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S. Albani* (Rolls Ser.), ii. 406; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 253.

²⁷ *1st Reg. Stretton*, 161-3; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 460; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 253.

²⁸ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 443-4.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 442, 463; *Cal. Pat.* 1361-4, 214; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 70, 196; Staffs. R. O., D.593/A/1/34/14 (mandate from papal judges delegate to take testimony of Thos. Newport's witnesses, Aug. 1375). Sainsbury died in Lombardy towards the end of the 14th cent.: B.L. Harl. MS. 2071, f. 16; *Some Obits of Abbots and Founders of St. Werburgh's Abbey* (R.S.L.C. lxiv), 97-8.

and, in particular, the abbot's irresponsibility again caused concern. In March 1400 a royal protection was issued to some of the monks of the house and to the abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, who intended to visit the abbey to investigate reports that Abbot Henry Sutton had wasted its possessions, removed many of its goods, and refused to return to Chester.³⁰ If the visitation took place it was soon followed by the arrival of Archbishop Thomas Arundel on his metropolitan visitation in October 1400. When Abbot Sutton claimed exemption from visitation the archbishop waited in Chester for a day until the abbot submitted and requested visitation, although he did not renounce his claim to exemption from visitation by the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and the archdeacon of Chester.³¹ The injunctions issued after the visitation were mainly concerned to restore the finances of the house and control the behaviour of the abbot. He was to report on his debts and assets to the whole chapter, or to a committee of the monks, and to hand over all essential documents; the common seal was to be kept in a chest to which he, the prior, and three monks chosen by the chapter should each hold a key; the abbot was not to lease, sell, or give away any lands without the chapter's consent, and the permission of the whole chapter, or a majority of it, was to be obtained for any expenditure over £10; finally, a central treasury and accounting procedure was set up.³² Some evidence survives of the financial policies of Abbot Sutton and his predecessors which provoked such stringent reforming measures. Abbot Thomas Newport seems to have been as exacting and unpopular as a landlord as Abbot Sainsbury³³ and in the summer of 1381 his bond tenants in Wirral, doubtless emboldened by news from the south, held secret meetings to raise money to buy 'help and maintenance' in pursuing a quarrel with the abbot; when warned at the end of July to refrain from such meetings a group of them rose in arms and assembled at Lea-by-Backford where they were seized and taken to Chester castle.³⁴ At that period, however, the monks were finding it difficult to continue to exploit their demesne lands directly; they claimed in the 1390s that 'the rents and services which their tenants and serfs used to pay have been irrecoverably diminished and withdrawn under pretext of pestilences'.³⁵ A policy of leasing the former demesne lands was begun which was to continue for the rest of the abbey's existence and, in addition, its manors were occasionally mortgaged to pay annuities to creditors.³⁶ Of more concern to the

ecclesiastical authorities and to the Crown as patron of the abbey was the attempt by Abbot Sutton and his predecessors to increase the revenues of the abbey from its spiritualities. The alienation by Abbot Newport of the advowsons of the abbey's churches in Cheshire to Sir John Delves and Thomas and John Davenport without the permission of the earl of Chester resulted in an armed skirmish at Bebington in 1381 and the intervention of the Crown in the 1390s in a dispute over the advowson of Astbury.³⁷ In the 1390s the abbey sought to appropriate its remaining churches; it had already appropriated Chipping Campden in 1340.³⁸ The appropriation of the churches of Astbury and St. Mary on the Hill, Chester, was secured from the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield allegedly by means of forged papal bulls and permission was obtained from the Crown to appropriate the churches of Aston and Weston upon Trent in return for the alienation of the advowson of Denford (Northants.) to the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield.³⁹ In addition, in an attempt to obtain even greater financial advantages, licences were obtained to appoint monks or secular chaplains to serve the parishes of St. Oswald's and St. Mary on the Hill in Chester and of Prestbury, Astbury, Bromborough, Aston, and Weston upon Trent.⁴⁰ Such unscrupulous exploitation provoked the intervention of the ecclesiastical authorities and the appropriations secured by Abbot Sutton were either ineffective or revoked after the visitation in 1400.⁴¹ Although mainly concerned with the abbot's financial maladministration, the injunctions issued in 1400 also attempted to control his behaviour within the abbey: he was ordered to avoid the company of a suspect woman and to reform his household; two of the monks were to supervise his religious observances and to sleep with him in his chamber to safeguard his reputation; he was also enjoined to treat his fellow-monks kindly, not to imprison them without the consent of the chapter, and to leave punishment for breaches of the Rule to the prior or subprior.⁴² The injunctions are less informative on the behaviour of the members of the convent probably because the shortcomings of the superior diverted attention from his fellow monks. The monks were piously enjoined to keep the silence, say their offices regularly, show due deference to their seniors, and maintain almsgiving. The practices of wearing fashionable clothes and eating privately were condemned, as they had been after the visitations in 1315 and 1323; they had probably become more common since then and may even have

³⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1399-1401, 248.

³¹ Lambeth Pal. Libr., Reg. Arundel, i, f. 477.

³² *Ibid.* ff. 482v.-3v.; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 117.

³³ P.R.O., CHES 25/4, rot. 44.

³⁴ E. Powell and G. M. Trevelyan, *The Peasants' Rising and the Lollards*, 13-16.

³⁵ *Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 532-3.

³⁶ *Cal. Close*, 1396-9, 64; *Ch. in Chester*, 60-61; C. Platt, *The Monastic Grange in Medieval Eng.* 229; Earwaker, *East Ches.* ii. 178. For rentals of abbey property in Ches. in 1398, 1431-2, 1439-40 see B.L. Add. MS. 36764; P.R.O., SC 11/892; SC 11/901; and in Weston upon Trent in 15th cent. see Staffs. R.O., D.(W.) 1734/3/52; D.(W.) 1734/J.1999-2004.

³⁷ 1st Reg. *Stretton*, 180, 186; 3 *Sheaf*, xxiii, p. 68; B.L. Harl. MS. 1994, ff. 5-9v.; *Cal. Pat.* 1392-6, 243.

³⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1330-4, 261; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 166-7; *Reg. Bransford* (Worcs. Hist. Soc. N.S. iv), pp. 69-70; above.

³⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1392-6, 516; 1396-9, 8-9, 11; P.R.O., CHES 25/8, rot. 46d.; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/6, ff. 102-3, 105v.-106;

V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 21. A licence to appropriate the churches of Astbury and St. Mary on the Hill had been obtained in 1354 but seems to have been opposed by the bp. (*Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 161, 203; *Ch. in Chester*, 173-4); the rectory of St. Olave's, Chester, was united with that of St. Mary on the Hill in 1394 (Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/6, f. 101) but reinstated in 1406; *Ch. in Chester*, 68, 177. The appropriation of Astbury, Aston, and Weston upon Trent was confirmed by the pope in 1396 (*Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 532-3); the 'forged' bulls may have been issued by Clement VII in 1376; J. C. Cox, *Churches of Derby* iv. 4.

⁴⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1396-9, 136; *Ch. in Chester*, 68; R. H. Snape, *Eng. Monastic Finances in Later Middle Ages*, 79-80.

⁴¹ *Ch. in Chester*, 68, 174, 177; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 25; Cox, *Churches of Derby* iv. 4.

⁴² Lambeth Pal. Libr., Reg. Arundel, i, ff. 482v.-3v.; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 118. A few years previously he had been accused of imprisoning a woman in his chamber: P.R.O., CHES 25/8, rot. 44.

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been encouraged by the arrangements made in 1379 for a chantry for Abbots Bebington and Newport which included provisions to pay wages to the monks celebrating at the altars of St. Mary, St. Peter, and St. Stephen and of clothing allowances to all the monks.⁴³ A final injunction in 1400 ordered that lay people who visited the abbey were not to have private rooms or special food and were not to linger; the memory must have been fresh of the violent intrusion into the abbey in 1394 of members of the royal household purveying victuals for the Irish expedition and of the resulting quarrel with the city authorities.⁴⁴

Abbot Sutton survived the metropolitan visitation of 1400 but his government of the monastery continued to cause concern and finally provoked the intervention of the General Chapter of English Benedictines. Opposition to the abbot within the monastery was led by two monks who were accused of apostasy and various other crimes both inside and outside the abbey, including plotting the death of their abbot, but who obtained a royal pardon in 1412 with the help of the General Chapter.⁴⁵ The president of the General Chapter, having established the extent of the abbot's mismanagement of the affairs of the house, appointed proctors in Rome to proceed against him.⁴⁶ The death of Abbot Sutton in 1413 forestalled any further action and he was succeeded by Thomas Yardley, since 1403 the leader of the opposition. In 1415 Henry V took the abbey into his own hands and committed its custody to Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester; after allowance had been made to maintain the abbot and convent and their servants, all the revenues were to be used to relieve the abbey which was said to have been impoverished by the policy of former abbots in burdening it with annuities, pensions, and corrodies, in wasting its goods and jewels, and in leasing its property improvidently.⁴⁷ One improvident lease was evidently thought necessary in 1418 to help clear the abbey's debts: the manor of Weston upon Trent was leased to the bishop of Durham for twelve years in return for 800 marks paid 'beforehand out of commiseration for the indigence of the abbot and convent'.⁴⁸ The Provincial Chapter in 1426 ordered a special visitation by the prior of Worcester after the regular visitors had reported that the house needed reform.⁴⁹ Factional strife revived and in 1437 the abbey was again taken into royal custody, 'by reason of it having been wasted by misrule', and committed to the bishop of Bath and Wells and the earl of Stafford.⁵⁰ No further attempts at reform were made during the 15th century by the lay or ecclesiastical authorities, although in 1446 the abbot and his successors were freed from official duties in collecting clerical subsidies 'in order that he and his convent may attend to divine service

more quietly'.⁵¹ Evidence is lacking on the finances of the house in the later 15th century though, since building operations were revived at the end of the century, they possibly improved.⁵² The abbey and its individual members were, however, frequently involved with the citizens of Chester during the 15th and the early 16th centuries. On several occasions monks were indicted in the mayor's court for attacks on fellow religious and citizens;⁵³ in 1478 Abbot Richard Oldham, who had been imprisoned in Chester castle in 1461 for an unspecified offence, had to enter into a bond for £1,000 to keep the peace towards the mayor and in 1480 Oldham and twelve others, of whom at least half can be identified as monks, were bound over to keep the peace with a large body of tradesmen.⁵⁴ At the same period some women were indicted for being 'whores to several monks' and in 1505 the abbot complained that a draper of Chester had induced one of his monks to rob him and apostasize.⁵⁵ Some efforts were made to regulate the access of lay people to the precincts: in 1414 the abbot complained that public access to the convent gardens was inconvenient, and was given permission to close the postern gates *super muros* and hold the keys; the licence was renewed in 1451⁵⁶ but in 1536 when the royal visitors ordered that the only entry to the abbey should be through the main gate the abbot complained that another gate in the monastery wall which he had closed up had been thrown open by some citizens of Chester, 'who come into the monastery at their pleasure'.⁵⁷ Another quarrel which had smouldered since the end of the 13th century reached its climax in the early 16th. In the 1499 *quo warranto* enquiry the abbot claimed the right to hold a court every fortnight at the chapel of St. Thomas the Martyr outside the North Gate but that was challenged by the city authorities with new confidence after they had obtained a charter from Henry VII in 1506. A dispute in 1507 over the abbot's right to demand recognizances to keep the peace after a brawl in Northgate Street led to the submission of the question of the extent of the abbot's jurisdiction in the city to arbitration. The arbitrators' award in 1509 deprived the abbot of the right to hold a court during the fair, limited his rights of jurisdiction within the precincts and in Northgate Street, and established the superior authority of the mayor, sheriffs, and coroners of the city.⁵⁸

The fortunes of the abbey revived under the vigorous abbots Simon Ripley (1485–93) and John Birkenshaw (1493–1524). Apart from the building of the choir stalls in the late 14th century, little work had been done on the church fabric since Abbot Sainsbury's time. Abbot Ripley revived the abbey's claim to timber

⁴³ Lambeth Pal. Libr., Reg. Arundel, i, ff. 482v–3v.; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 98, 118; 2nd Reg. *Stretton*, 136–8.

⁴⁴ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 107–10, 118.

⁴⁵ P.R.O., CHES 25/10, rot. 31; *Coram Rege* Rolls (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] xvi), 89; *Cal. Pat.* 1408–13, 388–9; *Chapters of Eng. Black Monks*, iii (Camd. 3rd ser. liv), 161.

⁴⁶ *Chapters of Eng. Black Monks*, iii, 93, 161–2.

⁴⁷ *Cal. Papal Reg.* vi, 350; *Cal. Pat.* 1413–16, 353.

⁴⁸ *Cal. Close*, 1413–19, 518–19, 521–2; 29 D.K.R. 72. The lands were valued in 1535 at over twice the rent charged in 1418: *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v, 205.

⁴⁹ *Chapters of Eng. Black Monks*, ii, 174.

⁵⁰ P.R.O., CHES 25/12, rot. 26; *Cal. Pat.* 1436–41, 76.

⁵¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1441–6, 438.

⁵² *Ch. in Chester*, 75; below.

⁵³ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 125, 129–30; Chester City R.O., MB/5, f. 74.

⁵⁴ 37 D.K.R. 779–80. For the identification of the monks see Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/12, ff. 5, 178, 264.

⁵⁵ B. L. Harl. MS. 2057, f. 105v.; P.R.O., CHES 29/207, rot. 14.

⁵⁶ 37 D.K.R. 137–8; B.L. Harl. MS. 2071, f. 11. The 1451 renewal has been misdated to 1538: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii(1), p. 226; cf. *ibid.* xiii(2), p. 855 where the suggested revisions of dates are not necessary.

⁵⁷ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 396. For the limits of the precincts in 1509 see 3 *Sheaf*, v, p. 5.

⁵⁸ 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 9; B.L. Harl. MS. 1989, ff. 87–89; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 133–5.

from Delamere Forest for building and completed the rebuilding of the south transept and the central tower; he also completed the south aisle of the nave, rebuilt the north arcade to match that of the south and built the stone pulpitum at his 'sole expense'.⁶⁹ Abbot Birkenshaw, an even more ambitious builder, probably built the nave clerestory and the roof of the north transept and certainly the west front of the church, probably before 1500; he also extended the north and south choir aisles to overlap the Lady Chapel and built the lower stage of the south-western tower and the adjoining porch. The rebuilding of the cloisters was begun by him and continued by Abbot Highfield and Abbot Marshall; in 1526 William Danald ordered his executors, two monks of the house, to glaze one of the new windows in the cloister.⁷⁰ Abbot Birkenshaw's vigorous and arrogant exercise of his rights provoked a hostile reaction not only from the city but also from the ecclesiastical authorities. The right of the abbot of Chester to use the mitre and pontifical staff which was first granted to Abbot Bebington in the 14th century was challenged by Bishop Geoffrey Blythe; in the course of a suit promoted by the bishop at Rome Abbot Birkenshaw refused to produce the relevant documents, was excommunicated, and later secured public absolution by a local priest 'in contempt and derision of the apostolic see'. In 1516 Pope Leo X invoked the help of Cardinal Wolsey in dealing with the overbearing abbot but Wolsey was not prepared to intervene until 1524 when Birkenshaw was forced to resign his office; the ostensible reason was his infringement of the Statute of Praemunire by obtaining papal confirmation of the exemption of the abbey from ordinary and metropolitan jurisdiction but he had also, as was later alleged in the charges against Wolsey, incurred the wrath of the Cardinal over a collusive lease of the manor of Prestbury involving Sir John Stanley and George Legh of Adlington, who was said to be the husband of Wolsey's mistress.⁷¹ Birkenshaw was replaced briefly by Thomas Highfield, who died in 1527, and then by Thomas Marshall, who had formerly been prior of Wallingford (Berks.) and who was said to have paid Wolsey 1,000 marks for the abbacy of Chester.⁷² After the fall of Wolsey Abbot Birkenshaw was restored to his office and he later complained bitterly to Thomas Cromwell of the behaviour of the 'pretensed abbots' who, during his absence, had oppressed the poor tenants of the abbey and leased the demesne lands which he and his pre-

decessors had kept in hand to maintain the hospitality of the abbey.⁷³ During the declining years of Abbot Birkenhsaw the involvement of the abbey with the gentry families of Cheshire, which had been marked from the mid 15th century,⁷⁴ became even closer and the factions in the monastery reflected the feuds in the county.⁷⁵ Like Abbot John Butler of Vale Royal, Birkenshaw may have owed his restoration to office to the influence at court of William Brereton of Malpas; Brereton, who held the annual audit of his estates in the abbey in 1531, received an annual pension of £20 from the abbot from 1531 and obtained from him the advowson of Astbury.⁷⁶ A letter to Brereton from a disgruntled servant of the abbot reveals that the convent was split in the early 1530s into opposing factions struggling to gain influence over Abbot Birkenshaw and control of the office of prior; Brereton had his 'friends and lovers' in the monastery but they were opposed by those who were in alliance with his enemies in the shire.⁷⁷ Brereton was informed that one of the monks, Thomas Clarke, was 'a man singularly well taken with the masters of the monastery and all your friends in these parts' and when the 'aged and impotent' Birkenshaw was forced to resign by Dr. Thomas Legh in 1538 another Brereton, Sir William Brereton of Brereton, advocated, with the support of the mayor and citizens of Chester, that Clarke should succeed as abbot.⁷⁸ Thomas Clarke became the last abbot of Chester and Abbot Birkenshaw was allowed a pension of £100 and the cost of the upkeep of a chaplain, three servants, and five horses, provided he took over the responsibility for debts incurred during his abbacy.⁷⁹ Abbot Clarke paid the abbey's annual fee of £20 to Thomas Cromwell more promptly than his predecessor⁸⁰ but he also had to resist pressure from Cromwell for leases for his friends of the remaining demesne lands of the abbey; in 1538 he pointed out that the manors of Sutton and Ince had been leased according to Cromwell's instructions before he became abbot and 'nothing remains but the manor of Huntington without which hospitality cannot be kept'.⁸¹ Later in the same year the abbot and convent leased or re-leased most of the remaining lands and rectories of the house in anticipation of dissolution; in September and October 1538 15 leases were concluded, including one of the manor of Huntington to Dr. Thomas Legh, and at least one of the leases contained the condition that it would be void if the monastery was not dissolved.⁸² By the summer of 1539

⁶⁹ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 105–6, 134–6, 140; 37 D.K.R. 780.

⁷⁰ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 142–4, 154–6; B.L. Harl. MS. 2125, f. 32v; 3 *Sheaf*, xx, p. 71. In 1525 Abbot Highfield spent £80 on building work: B.L. Harl. MS. 1994, f. 31v.

⁷¹ L. & P. Hen. VIII, ii(1), p. 848; vi(1), p. 232; vii, p. 319; Dugdale, *Mon.* ii. 390; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 149, 151–3; *Ancient Parish of Prestbury* (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xcvi), 93–4; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* i. 245–6; ii. 178; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 642.

⁷² L. & P. Hen. VIII, iv(1), p. 64; iv(2), pp. 1590, 1593, 1647; B.L. Stowe MS. 141, f. 10.

⁷³ L. & P. Hen. VIII, v, p. 638; vii, pp. 319, 532. Below, list of abbots. Birkenshaw himself was accused of high handed treatment of tenants: *Lancs. and Ches. Cases in Star Chamber*, i. (R.S.L.C. lxxi), 74; P.R.O., REQ 2/163/69, f. 3.

⁷⁴ *Ch. in Chester*, 21; Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 129; 37 D.K.R. 216; *Lancs and Ches. Cases in Star Chamber*, i. 63.

⁷⁵ E. W. Ives, 'Court and County Palatine in the Reign of Hen. VIII: the Career of Wm. Brereton of Malpas',

T.H.S.L.C. cxxiii, 25.

⁷⁶ B.L. Stowe MS. 141, f. 10; *Letters and Accounts of Wm. Brereton of Malpas* (R.S.L.C. cxvi), 32, 64, 245, 255; John Rylands Libr., Latin MS. 460, f. 28v.; below, Vale Royal abbey.

⁷⁷ *Letters and Accounts of Wm. Brereton*, 86–8. Another servant complained to Cromwell in 1534 that he had been deprived of his office by the abbot after 50 years' service as clerk, butler, and porter: L. & P. Hen. VIII, vii, pp. 606–7.

⁷⁸ *Letters and Papers of Wm. Brereton*, 88; L. & P. Hen. VIII, xiii(1), pp. 75–6.

⁷⁹ L. & P. Hen. VIII, xiii(2), p. 114.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* xi, p. 578; xiii(1), p. 52; xiv(2), pp. 318, 320, 323, 326.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* xii(1), p. 517; xiii(1), p. 428. In 1514 a licence had been obtained to inclose and empark 1,000 acres of the demesnes of Huntington, Cheveley, and Saughton: 26 D.K.R. 28.

⁸² Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 274–6; B.L. Harl. MS. 2063, f. 25; 3 *Sheaf*, xxxii, p. 52; *Ch. in Chester*, 89–90.

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St. Werburgh's was the last remaining religious house in Cheshire, apart from St. Mary's nunnery, and rumours were circulating that it was intended to erect some of the surviving abbeys into bishoprics; in November 1539 the abbot sent a servant to London with letters 'to know what will become of the monastery, and whether any suit will serve to stay the dissolution by alteration, as many shall be'.⁷³ No suit served and the abbey and all its possessions were surrendered by Abbot Clarke on 20 January 1540.⁷⁴ It has been calculated that there were about 28 monks in the abbey at the time of its dissolution and of these eleven, including the prior of the cell on Hilbre, were awarded pensions and ten, including the abbot, remained to staff the new cathedral established in 1541.⁷⁵

The gross income of the abbey in 1535 was given as £1,073 17s. 7½d., of which £720 12s. 6½d. came from temporal possessions, including £71 10s. 5½d. from property in Chester, and £353 5s. 1d. from spiritualities. The net income was £1,003 5s. 11d. after the allowance of £70 11s. 8½d. for expenses which included £14 for alms distributed for the souls of the kings of England on Maundy Thursday, £9 13s. 4d. for the maintenance of three chantries, and £31 on fees for the earl of Derby, the abbey's steward,⁷⁶ for the auditor or 'clerk of the chekker' and ten bailiffs.⁷⁷ In 1525 the abbot administered an annual income of £741 2s. 8d. which included £59 received in payments for herbage; his expenses in that year totalled £609 14s. and included payments of £243 9s. 4d. for bread and ale for the convent and guesthouse, for wine for his household, and for the expenses of his kitchen; £21 was paid in fees to his steward, marshal, and carver, £6 in wages to his servants in the abbey, including a slater, baker, and carter, £14 16s. 8d. in wages and fees to the officers of his guest house and £26 13s. 4d. on clothing for the abbot and his servants; outside the abbey the abbot paid £18 in wages to his stewards, bailiffs, and parkers, £66 13s. 4d. in husbandry expenses, and £9 6s. 8d. to stipendiary chaplains serving at Bromborough and Ince; £80 was spent on building work and almost as much, £70, on legal fees and 'fees to magnates'.⁷⁸ After the abbey's estates had passed to the Crown £114 9s. continued to be paid in fees and annuities, ranging from £40 to the Chancellor, Sir Thomas Audley, to 26s. 8d. to the abbey's porter, while only £21 13s. 4d. was spent on the wages of chaplains serving at Bromborough, Ince, Shotwick, and Wervin, and St. Oswald's and St. Bridget's in Chester.⁷⁹ Apart from the substantial bailiwick of Weston upon Trent in Derbyshire which included lands and rents in Weston upon Trent, Aston upon Trent, Wilne, Shardlow, Morley, and Derby, and small

rents from Rufford (Lancs.) and Newcastle-under-Lyme (Staffs.), the temporal possessions of the dissolved abbey were concentrated in Cheshire. There were substantial holdings of property in Chester and in the surrounding area, including the manors of Huntington and Cheveley, of Saughton (including lands and rents in Saughton, Huxley, and Coddington), of Ince (including lands and rents in Ince, Elton, Cattenhall, Manley, Ichincote, Helsby, Bridge Trafford, and Plemstall), of Upton (including lands and rents in Upton, Boughton, Newton, Wervin, Croughton, Stamford Mill, Christleton, Chorlton, Backford, Lea-by-Backford, Moston, Saughall, Shotwick, and Crewe in Farndon), of Cotton Abbots (including lands and rents in Crabwall, Heath Houses in Newton, Puddington, and Poulton Lancelyn) and the bailiwick of Sutton (including lands and rents in Little Sutton, Great Sutton, Overpool, Hooton, Childer Thornton, and Whitby). In the Wirral peninsula there were the manors of Sutton in Wirral (including lands in the parish of Bromborough), of Bromborough (including lands and rents in Bromborough, Bebington, Eastham, and Plymyard) and of Irby (including lands and rents in Irby, Thurstaston, Greasby, Frankby, West Kirby, Noctorum, Woodchurch, and Wallasey). In the east of the county the abbey held the manors of Church Lawton, of Tilstone Fearnall (including lands and rents in Tilstone, Fearnall, and Iddinshall) and of Barnshaw (including lands and rents in Barnshaw, Goostrey, Lees, Cranage, Chelford, Astle, Northwich, Hulse, Winnington, Over Tabley, Plumley, and Northenden) and rents from Acton and Nantwich. The spiritual possessions of the abbey consisted of the appropriated churches of Chipping Campden (Glos.), St. Oswald's, Chester, Shotwick, Bromborough, West Kirby,⁸⁰ Neston, Ince, and Prestbury, tithes from Crabwall and Heath Houses, and pensions from the churches and chapels of St. Peter's, Chester, St. Mary on the Hill, Chester, Christleton, Bebington, Eastham, West Kirby, Thurstaston, Wallasey, Dodleston, Coddington, Tattenhall, Waverton, Handley, Astbury, Northenden, and Weston upon Trent, Aston upon Trent, and Morley (Derb.).⁸¹

ABBOTS⁸²

Richard of Bec, the first abbot, died 1117.⁸³
William, elected 1121, died 1140.⁸⁴
Ralph, elected 1141, died 1157.⁸⁵
Robert I, son of Nigel, elected 1157, died 1175.⁸⁶
Robert II, elected 1175, died 1184.⁸⁷
Robert III of Hastings, appointed 1186, resigned 1194.⁸⁸

275–6. For a rental of abbey lands in 1534–5 see B.L. Harl. MS. 1994, ff. 10–29v.

⁸² For dates of obits see *Some Obits of Abbots and Founders of St. Werburgh's Abbey*, Chester (R.S.L.C. lxiv), 103.

⁸³ Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses, Eng. & Wales, 940–1216*, 39; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. 1 n.

⁸⁴ *Ann. Cestr.* 18, 20. ⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 20, 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 22, 26; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. ii n.; *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 91.

⁸⁷ *Ann. Cestr.* 26, 30.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 34, 44; *Gervasii Cantuariensis Opera Historica* (Rolls Ser.), i, 335–6; above. He was a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury.

⁷³ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv(2), pp. 151–2, 190.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* xv, p. 29.

⁷⁵ Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 179–85; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xv, p. 29; xvi, p. 535.

⁷⁶ He was appointed in 1509: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, i(1), p. 117.

⁷⁷ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v, 205–6. In 1536 the royal visitors estimated the income at £800 and the debts at £100: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 141.

⁷⁸ B.L. Harl. MS. 1994, ff. 31–2. Troops of players received £13 6s. 8d. in gifts and rewards.

⁷⁹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i, 276.

⁸⁰ Known as 'Le Bordland': *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. xxxiii.

⁸¹ P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/7385; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i.

Geoffrey, elected 1194, died 1208.⁸⁹
 Hugh Grylle, elected 1208, died 1226.⁹⁰
 William Marmion, elected 1226, died 1228.⁹¹
 Walter of Pinchbeck, elected 1228, died 1240.⁹²
 Roger Frend, elected 1240, died 1249.⁹³
 Thomas of Capenhurst, elected 1249, died 1265.⁹⁴
 Simon Whitchurch (*de Albo Monasterio*), elected 1265, died 1291.⁹⁵
 Thomas Birchills, elected 1291, died 1323.⁹⁶
 William Bebington, elected 1324, dead by 1352.⁹⁷
 Richard Sainsbury, elected before 1352, resigned 1362.⁹⁸
 Thomas Newport, elected 1363, died 1386.⁹⁹
 William Merston, elected 1386, died 1387.¹
 Henry Sutton, elected 1387, died 1413.²
 Thomas Yardley, elected 1413, died 1434.³
 John Saughall, elected 1435, died 1455.⁴
 Richard Oldham, elected 1455, died 1485.⁵
 Simon Ripley, elected 1485, died 1493.⁶
 John Birkenshaw, elected 1493, resigned 1524.⁷
 Thomas Highfield, elected 1524, died 1527.⁸
 Thomas Marshall, or Beche, elected 1527, displaced 1529 or 1530.⁹
 John Birkenshaw, restored 1529 or 1530, resigned 1538.¹⁰
 Thomas Clarke, elected 1538, surrendered the abbey in 1540.¹¹

The common seal of the monastery was taken out of the hands of the abbot in 1362 and in 1400 arrangements were made by Archbishop Arundel to safeguard the seal and regulate its use.¹² A seal *ad causas* is mentioned in 1461¹³ but no impression appears to have survived.

A seal in use in the late 12th and early 13th centuries¹⁴ is a pointed oval $3\frac{1}{4}$ by $2\frac{1}{8}$ in. and depicts St. Werburgh in grave-clothes. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM SANCTE WERBURGE VIRGINIS.

Another seal in use in 1271 and 1538¹⁵ is circular, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter. The obverse shows an elaborately detailed Gothic church, partly in elevation and partly in section, with transepts and a pinnacled tower at the angles of which are flags. Under the tower arch is the figure of St. Werburgh, seated on a throne, with a pastoral staff in her right hand and a book in her left; in the transepts on either side is the standing figure of a monk facing inwards in prayer with a monk's head enclosed in a quatrefoiled panel above. On the carved plinth at the base is a monk's head in a quatrefoiled panel with two lancet-shaped niches on either side. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM CONVENTUS ECCLESIE SANCTE WERBURGE VIRGINIS DE CESTRIE.

The reverse shows a similar building with the figure of a king on a throne below the round-headed tower arch; he holds a sceptre fleury in his right hand and an orb surmounted with a cross in his left hand. In the transept on the right is the full-length figure of St. Paul and on the left the figure of St. Peter. On the carved plinth at the base is a monk's head in a quatrefoiled panel with three lancet-shaped niches on either side. Legend, lombardic: PARTITUR PROPRIUM CUM MARTIRE VIRGO SIGILLUM.

The seal of Abbot Hugh Grylle (1208–26)¹⁶ is a pointed oval $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. and depicts the abbot with a staff in his right hand and a book in his left hand. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM HUGONIS ABBATIS CESTRIE.

⁸⁹ *Ann. Cestr.* 44; *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 94; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 250.

⁹⁰ *Ann. Cestr.* 48, 54; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. ii n. He was a monk of Spalding.

⁹¹ *Ann. Cestr.* 48, 54; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. ii n.

⁹² *Ann. Cestr.* 54, 60.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 60, 66; *Close R.* 1237–42, 215. Prior.

⁹⁴ *Ann. Cestr.* 66, 92; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i, p. iii n.; *Cal. Pat.* 1247–58, 51. Prior.

⁹⁵ *Ann. Cestr.* 92, 94, 96; *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 423. For his name see Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 35.

⁹⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 425; *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/2, f. 100v.; *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 93. A monk of the house.

⁹⁷ *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/2, ff. 100v.–101; *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 101; *Cal. Papal Pets.* i. 354–5; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 468. He probably died in 1349; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 25n.

⁹⁸ *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 468; *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 97–8; above.

⁹⁹ *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 95; *1st Reg. Stretton*, 161–3; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 460; *Cal. Pat.* 1385–9, 152.

¹ *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 90–1; *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/6, f. 52; *Cal. Pat.* 1385–9, 269. A monk of the house.

² *Cal. Pat.* 1385–9, 281; 1413–16, 9. Prior.

³ *Cal. Pat.* 1413–16, 97; 1422–9, 446; *Cal. Papal Reg.* vi. 350. A monk of the house.

⁴ *Cal. Pat.* 1422–9, 447; 1452–61, 246. A monk of the house.

⁵ *Ibid.* 1452–61, 241; *Cal. Papal Reg.* xi. 35; *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 99–100. Prior before election and bp. of Sodor and Man from 1478.

⁶ *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 98–9; *Materials Illustrative of the Reign of Hen. VIII* (Rolls Ser.), i. 294; 26 D.K.R. 28. He was a monk of the house and had been a scholar at

Cambridge in 1471–2; *Staffs. R. O.*, D.(W.) 1734/J.2004.

⁷ *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 92; 26 D.K.R. 28; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv(1), p. 64; above. A monk of the house: *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/12, f. 216v.; see also M. V. Taylor, '16th-Cent. Abbots of St. Werburgh's', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xix(2), pp. 172–3.

⁸ *Obits of Abbots and Founders*, 92; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vi(1), pp. 64, 559; iv(2), p. 1590. A monk of the house: *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/13, f. 283.

⁹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv(2), p. 1647; iv(3), p. 2878; above. He had been prior of Wallingford (B.L. Stowe MS. 141, f. 10; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv(2), p. 1593); he was elected abbot of Colchester in 1533 and executed in 1540: *V.C.H. Essex*, ii. 97–100, 102; *Emden, Biog. Reg. Oxford*, 1501–40, 382.

¹⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv(3), p. 2878; xiii(1), p. 75; 26 D.K.R. 28. 'John, Abbot of Chester' was summoned to convocation in Nov. 1529: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv(3), p. 2700 but in May 1530 it was hoped that the abbot of Chester, 'sometime named Condam (*quondam*)' would be restored: *ibid.* p. 2878; below, Vale Royal abbey. He drew his pension until 1543 and probably died in 1544: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xviii(2), p. 122.

¹¹ 26 D.K.R. 28; above. He became the first dean of the cathedral: below, Chester Cathedral.

¹² Above. ¹³ *P.R.O.*, C 81/1786/9.

¹⁴ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 8–9; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 368; B.L. Add. Ch. 49974; W. F. Irvine, 'Chester in 12th and 13th Cents.', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* x, plate facing p. 20. ¹⁵ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 293; F. Taylor, 'Selected Ches. Seals from John Rylands Libr.', *Bull. John Rylands Libr.* xxvi, 12–13; W. de G. Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 503; Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 133.

¹⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 368; B.L. Add. Ch. 49974; *J.C.A.S. N.S.* x, plate facing p. 16.

A HISTORY OF CHESHIRE

The *secretum* is a classical gem showing a monk's head. Legend, lombardic: GRACIA DEI SUM ID QUOD SUM.

The seal of Abbot Henry Sutton in use in 1394¹⁷ is a pointed oval 3½ by 2 in. and depicts the abbot wearing a jewelled mitre, with a book in his right hand and a pastoral staff in his left; he stands in a carved and canopied niche with tabernacle work on brackets at the sides on which are shields of arms: on the left those of France and England quartered and on the right that

of Hugh I, earl of Chester, a wolf's head erased. Legend: . . . SANCTE WERBURGE CESTRIE.

A prior's seal, said to be 13th century in date,¹⁸ is a pointed oval 1½ by 1¼ in. and depicts the Virgin seated in a niche under a trefoiled arch with the Child on her left knee. On the right is an angel holding a candle in a candlestick; the figure on the left is broken away. In the base, under a trefoiled arch, with church towers at the sides, is a half-length figure in prayer facing to the left. Legend, lombardic: . . . PRIORIS . . .

HOUSE OF BENEDICTINE NUNS

THE PRIORY OF CHESTER

IN the middle 12th century Ranulph II, earl of Chester, granted some crofts from his demesne to the nuns of Chester. On the site, to the north west of the castle, were to be built the conventual buildings and a church dedicated to St. Mary.¹⁹ It has been pointed out that the earl was dealing with a body of nuns already in existence and the original founder was possibly Hugh, son of Oliver, a citizen of Chester, who held the crofts from the earl.²⁰ The community is, however, unlikely to have been in being for long before the site was granted and Ranulph II was traditionally regarded by the nuns as their founder.²¹ In its very early days the community was connected in some way with the nunnery founded c. 1145 at Clerkenwell in Middlesex.²² In 1186 Urban III confirmed to St. Mary, Clerkenwell, the grant by Ranulph, Earl of Chester, of the conventual church of the nuns of Chester, and in a confirmation by Richard I in 1190 the grant was said to have been of the place where the nuns of Chester dwelt.²³ Any connexion between the two houses had lapsed by the early 13th century.²⁴ Ranulph II was not a very generous benefactor to the nuns of Chester. When granting the site of the church and convent he freed the nuns of all tolls and secular exactions and gave them the privilege of their own court; he also gave them the right to fish from a boat on the Dee and annual rents of 40s. in 'Wic' and one mark in the earldom of Chester.²⁵ His son, Hugh II, gave them the church of Over, and their right to the advowson of its dependent chapel of Budworth was confirmed by Hugh's son, Ranulph III.²⁶ In addition Ranulph III gave them the manor of Wallerscote in Delamere forest and the right to grind corn for their table free in the mills of Chester.²⁷

Members of the circle of the earls of Chester

increased the house's possessions by giving land, usually in Chester or its suburbs and often on the occasion of members of their families joining the community. Richard the Butler, who witnessed the 'foundation' charter, gave the nuns three tenements in Lorimers' Row when his mother Gunmore took the veil²⁸ and a few years later Matilda de Roges brought with her son to the convent land in Christleton granted by her son Robert. Richard, son of Alfred, gave the nuns land in Handbridge with his daughters Beatrice and Juette and this grant was confirmed by Simon his brother-in-law who was probably a member of the Boydell family. Simon himself, his brother William, and his son Ralph made further grants to the house of land in Chester, Claverton, and Golborne. Brice Panton and Margery his wife gave some land in Nantwich in the early 1180s; their grant was witnessed by Nicholas and Lewis, sons of William the reeve, whose mother Eddusa granted the nuns a salt-pit in Nantwich when her daughter Agatha joined the community.²⁹ The latter grant was witnessed by Peter, the clerk of the earl of Chester, who himself gave them land on the walls of Chester close to their buildings.³⁰ In the 1230s and 1240s the house acquired land in Waverton and c. 1269 William Tabley granted all his demesne in Old Waverton in return for burial in the nuns' graveyard and other spiritual benefits.³¹ Many of the grants during the 13th century were not of land but of rents, which were evidently worth more to the nuns as many of the early grants of lands in Chester and elsewhere were converted into rent-charges during the century.³² The nuns acquired only one new church during the 13th century. In 1219 Hugh of Wells, bishop of Lincoln, granted them the church of Sutterby in Lincolnshire; they were presenting to it at the end of the century but had lost it by the dissolution.³³

¹⁷ Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, pp. 503-4.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 504.

¹⁹ W. F. Irvine, 'Notes on Hist. of St. Mary's Nunnery, Chester', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiii. 91-2. The grant was made between the birth of the earl's son in 1147 and the earl's death in 1153 and can probably be dated c. 1150.

²⁰ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiii. 71; B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 190.

²¹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/3, f. 146.

²² V.C.H. Mdx. i. 170.

²³ W. O. Hassall, 'Chester Property of Nunnery of St. Mary, Clerkenwell, in 12th Cent.', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxxvi (2), 178-9. The earl is likely to have been Ranulph II since Henry II confirmed a gift by him of property across Chester bridge in 1176 or 1178/9; *Cartulary of St. Mary Clerkenwell* (Camd.

3rd. ser. lxxi), 12.

²⁴ *Cart. of St. Mary Clerkenwell*, 275.

²⁵ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226-57, 310.

²⁶ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiii. 96, 99.

²⁷ Ibid. 96; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226-57, 310.

²⁸ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiii. 73-4, 92-4.

²⁹ Ibid. 93-5, 97-8.

³⁰ Ibid. 79, 98.

³¹ Ibid. 99-100, 102.

³² Ibid. 96, 97-8, 100, 103; *J.C.A.S. N.S.* x. 22, 25, 28-9, 33, 35; *Cart. Chest. Abbey*, ii, p. 465; V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 249.

³³ *Reg. Welles* (Cant. & York Soc.), iii. 95; *Reg. Sutton*, i (Lincoln Rec. Soc. xxxix), 81, 226.

Little is known about the size or state of the house in its first 150 years. It was evidently regarded as an attractive place for burials and in an agreement with the monks of St. Werburgh's and the canons of St. John's the nuns promised not to entice any of the inhabitants of Chester to be buried with them and to share the offerings of those who chose to be buried within their precinct.³⁴ The nuns were partially supported by alms of 40s. a year from the earls of Chester in the 12th and early 13th centuries and those alms, together with a quarter of the tithes of the expenses of the royal household whenever the king was in Chester, continued to be paid by the Crown after 1237.³⁵ Henry III also remitted a rent of 10 marks a year due from two carucates of the royal demesne held by the nuns; in 1244 the remission was said to be on account of their poverty and the losses they had sustained by Welsh raids.³⁶ The house was certainly in financial difficulties by the middle of the century. In 1246 the justice of Chester was empowered to give the royal assent to the election of a new prioress to save expense to the nuns and in 1253, at the time of another election, the nuns complained to Queen Eleanor that they were reduced to begging daily for their food.³⁷ A few years later the house was under the wardenship of the prior of Denhall hospital;³⁸ that guardianship and a handful of new grants of lands and rents made in the later 13th century may have been in response to the poverty of the house. One provided a lamp in the nuns' dormitory.³⁹ It was at that time that John Noble, citizen of Chester, and his wife, Eve Doubleday, later remembered as a principal benefactor, gave the nuns property in Chester the rents from which were to be used by the warden or prioress to maintain the church fabric and provide 12d. for each nun on her anniversary.⁴⁰ By 1277 the nuns had converted their various royal alms into a fixed annual payment of 24 marks and by 1300 the sum had been increased to £26 12s. 2d. by the addition of compensation for the loss of tithes in Over caused by the surrender of land to the king to endow Vale Royal abbey, and by the exchange of land in Wallerscote for a rent of 10s. from Middlewich.⁴¹ At the dissolution that payment of alms was the largest single item in the revenues of the house and the fact that arrears of £93 16s. 6d. were owing in 1297 must have added considerably to the nuns' financial hardship, although payment was regular in the earlier 14th century.⁴²

There were few new grants of land or rents during the earlier 14th century, except for a plot of land acquired in exchange for a plot of a similar size next to the Franciscan friary and for two tenements in Northgate Street granted by Cecily Crompton who was

named first in a chantry for benefactors set up in 1343.⁴³ In 1318 the prioress sold the half of Over rectory.⁴⁴ When Bishop Roger Northburgh visited the house in 1331 he found that its revenues were hardly sufficient to support its members and he forbade the prioress to admit any more nuns without his permission; he also forbade corrodies and fees for admitting novices. The prioress and other officers were to present their accounts once or twice a year to the whole convent or to a committee of the more senior nuns and the convent seal was to be kept in a coffer whose keys were to be held by the prioress, the subprioress, and a nun chosen by the convent. Apart from lax financial administration Northburgh found little wrong with the state of the house and the rest of his injunctions dealt with the problems commonly found in nunneries at that period.⁴⁵ The number of laywomen in the house caused concern to the farmer of the royal mills of the Dee. He demanded tolls for the corn and malt ground for the sustenance of the 'divers ladies, damsels and children' kept at the prioress's table but was ordered in 1358 to extend freedom from toll to all the inmates.⁴⁶ The Black Prince also supported the nuns when their freedom from toll and exemption from local taxation for their tenants was attacked by the Chester authorities. In May 1354 the mayor and sheriffs were ordered to stop distraining the nuns' tenants for a contribution towards a fine of 500 marks, but later in the year those tenants who engaged in trade and benefited from the franchises of the city were excluded from the exemption.⁴⁷ The privileges enjoyed by the nuns' tenants caused considerable concern and jealousy in the city; when the Black Prince issued a charter in 1358 defining the extent of the privileges those tenants who were freemen were excluded and the nuns were warned that they must not allow their tenants to exercise any craft or trade injurious to the citizens.⁴⁸ In 1383 the prioress and convent complained to the king that their tenants were prevented from enjoying the privileges granted by the Black Prince and it was confirmed that their tenants who were not members of the gild merchant were to be quit of tolls.⁴⁹ In 1391-2, however, under an agreement with the city authorities the prioress was obliged to give a bond of £1,000 that her tenants would appear at courts and pay dues like other citizens.⁵⁰ That attack on the nuns' privileges does not appear to have been successful for long, as the prioress asserted the full privileges of the house at the *quo warranto* inquiries in 1499 and in the 16th century the nuns were paying the city an annual gable rent of 20s. 'for liberties given unto them'.⁵¹

In addition to the annual payment of alms⁵² the nuns

³⁴ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii. 300-1.

³⁵ *Ches. in Pipe R.* 6, 7, 8; *Cal. Lib.* 1240-5, 71, 125. In 1246 the latter grant was said to have been made originally by Hugh, sometime earl of Chester: *Cal. Pat.* 1232-47, 495; T. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, ed. J. Nasmith, Chester VII.

³⁶ *Cal. Lib.* 1226-40, 416, 436; 1240-5, 13; 1245-51, 2, 90, 192; 1251-60, 121, 137; *Close R.* 1237-42, 324; 1242-7, 35, 272, 341, 435.

³⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1232-47, 482; M. A. E. Wood, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, i. 35.

³⁸ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiii. 101-2.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 101-3; *ibid.*, N.S. x. 28-9, 33; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* i, p. 338.

⁴⁰ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xiii. 101-2; *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/3, f. 146.

⁴¹ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* i, p. 299; *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 246-7; 1281-92, 75; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* (R.S.L.C. lix), 5.

⁴² *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 206; *Cal. Close*, 1288-98, 66; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 5, 23, 27, 40, 103, 110, 165, 216.

⁴³ *Cal. Pat.* 1292, 1301, 496; 1330-4, 360; P.R.O., CHES 3/2, no. 3; *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/3, f. 146.

⁴⁴ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* (R.S.L.C. lxviii), 117.

⁴⁵ *Lich. Jt. R.O.*, B/A/1/3, f. 40v.; *Ch. in Chester*, 85, 91.

⁴⁶ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 310.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 162, 182.

⁴⁸ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 346.

⁴⁹ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1341-1417, 287-8.

⁵⁰ B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 190v.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 2115, f. 58; 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 88.

⁵² Above.

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were occasionally helped by members of the royal family.⁵³ That help often took the form of timber from the forests of the earldom: in 1362 they were given six oaks from Peckforton park and in 1394 two oaks from Shorwick park to repair the church and other buildings.⁵⁴ Between 1400 and 1417 they were regularly allowed ten loads of fuel.⁵⁵ More substantial help, however, came from additional endowments. In 1362 the Black Prince granted them the advowson of the church of Llangathen (Carms.) and in 1365 the advowson of the chapel of Llanharan (Glam.); in 1373 they were released from the penalties of the Statute of Mortmain for neglecting to obtain a royal licence to appropriate their new church and chapel.⁵⁶ In 1388 they were released, because of their poverty, from the obligation as rectors of Llangathen to maintain a chaplain to say mass in Dryslwyn castle.⁵⁷ In the same year the king, who had learnt that the nuns had 'but a half-penny a day each for their pittance, besides bread and ale', granted them the advowson, with licence to appropriate, of the church of Lanbeblig and its chapel of Carnarvon.⁵⁸ The house already had a connexion with Carnarvon since in 1379 a chantry had been established for Robert Parys of Carnarvon (d. by 1377) and his wife at the altar dedicated to St. John the Baptist.⁵⁹ The Welsh churches added much to the income of the house: in 1535 they yielded £18 out of a total income of £25 10s. from spiritualities.⁶⁰ When the churches were temporarily lost as a result of the Welsh revolt in the early 15th century the nuns were granted compensation of 10 marks a year out of the fee farm of Shrewsbury and the payment was continued until 1447 on account of the poverty of the house.⁶¹ In 1381 the prioress and convent were licensed to acquire in mortmain lands worth 20 marks a year again allegedly because of the poverty of the house;⁶² it took ten years for the nuns to amass lands and rents of the permitted value.⁶³ The new property was concentrated in Chester, Claverton, and Lache and was added to other property in the same area which the nuns had acquired by purchase or exchange; in 1352 they bought two houses and 40 a. of land in Lache and in 1360 they exchanged their manor of Wallerscote for a house and 87 a. of land also in Lache.⁶⁴

The additional endowments seem to have alleviated the financial problems of the house although payment of alms became irregular in the 15th century.⁶⁵ The house was regularly exempted from taxation in view of its poverty,⁶⁶ but difficulties in the 15th century were caused rather by incompetence. Numbers were

limited according to the income: in 1379 and 1381 there were 13 nuns; 8 nuns (not including novices) petitioned the bishop at an election in 1473; from 1496 to the dissolution in 1540 the number of professed nuns and novices fluctuated between 12 and 14.⁶⁷ The names of nuns which have survived suggest that many of the inmates in the later middle ages were the daughters of Cheshire gentlemen and Chester citizens.⁶⁸ Ties of kinship and friendship probably explain the occasional bequest to members of the house at that period: in 1415 Adam de Mottrum, precentor of Salisbury cathedral, left ten marks to the prioress and nuns and three years later Thomas of Crewe left 100 marks to his sister Elizabeth, the prioress.⁶⁹ If some of the nuns were of good family, they were not, in general, very competent. In the middle years of the 15th century they could not conduct valid elections of prioresses: in 1441 the bishop collated after a three-month vacancy, in 1449 and 1479 elections were declared void because of incorrect procedure, and in 1453 the nuns asked for help from the bishop as they were not skilful enough to elect by themselves and could not afford legal advice.⁷⁰ Mismanagement was probably at its worst in 1455 when Bishop Reginald Boulers ordered a visitation to remedy certain flagrant abuses. He had heard that the church and other buildings needed repair urgently and that the goods of the house were being dissipated by the prioress's negligence.⁷¹ The injunctions issued in 1456 after the visitation dealt with various aspects of this financial mismanagement. The prioress had pawned the ornaments of the house and had mortgaged unnecessarily three pastures belonging to it; in future she was to alienate none of its goods or property without the consent of the whole convent and the permission of the bishop. She was also ordered to present the convent with accounts for her period in office and to prepare annual accounts in future. The arrangements made in 1331 to guard the convent seal were reiterated and it was ordered that no nun should hold more than one office unless the majority of the convent thought it necessary. The latter injunction was directed against Joan Brett who was cellarer, kitchener, and sacristan and had failed to present her accounts. The rest of the injunctions dealt with the regular observance of services, the maintenance of silence, and the exclusion of lay people from the convent; one nun was accused of incontinence and spreading disorder in the community and the prioress was ordered to report any other offenders.⁷²

⁵³ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 115.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 441; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 347.

⁵⁵ 36 D.K.R. 101-2, 104; 37 D.K.R. 132-3.

⁵⁶ J.C.A.S. N.S. xiii. 104; *Cal. Pat.* 1370-4, 261.

⁵⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1385-9, 445. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 530-1.

⁵⁹ P.R.O., CHES 25/7 (loose roll); 3 *Sheaf*, xxi, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 206.

⁶¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1399-1401, 292; 1413-16, 110; 1416-22, 368; 1422-8, 106; 1436-41, 477; *Cal. Close*, 1435-41, 394.

⁶² *Cal. Pat.* 1377-81, 587.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 1392-6, 62; P.R.O., C 143/415, no. 15; *Ch. in Chester*, 75.

⁶⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 66, 396.

⁶⁵ *Ch. in Chester*, 82 n.

⁶⁶ *Reg. Chichele* (Cant. & York Soc.), iii. 314; *Ch. in Chester*, 75.

⁶⁷ T.H.S.L.C. cxxiv. 22; *Traditio*, ii. 182; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, f. 107; *Bp. Blythe's Visitations* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 4th ser. vii), 43, 52, 128-9, 169; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xv, p. 30. The nunneries of Farewell (Staffs.), Black Ladies (Staffs.), and White Ladies (Salop.) were half the size of Chester but enjoyed less than half the income: V.C.H. *Staffs.* ii. 222, 224; V.C.H. *Salop.* ii. 84.

⁶⁸ *Ch. in Chester*, 27; and see lists in *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 44, 52, 128-9, 169; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xv, p. 30. The last prioress was a sister of Sir Thos. Grosvenor of Eaton.

⁶⁹ *Reg. Chichele* (Cant. & York Soc.), ii. 42; 3 *Sheaf*, xvii, p. 38.

⁷⁰ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, f. 125v; B/A/1/10, f. 29; B/A/1/12, ff. 107, 110v.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* B/A/1/11, f. 67.

⁷² *Ibid.* f. 81.

The state of the house improved at the beginning of the 16th century under the rule of Margery Pasmeye who was prioress from 1491 until her death in 1525.⁷³ When Bishop Geoffrey Blythe first visited the house in 1519 the prioress reported that it was free from debt and in good order; she was supported by the subprioress and other nuns, one of whom expressed a desire to become a minoress.⁷⁴ The position had not changed in 1521 when the subprioress expressed great admiration for her superior.⁷⁵ At Blythe's third visitation in 1524 religious observance was still being properly maintained but some problems emerged, possibly as a result of heavy taxation and the senility of the prioress. There were debts, though not large or intolerable,⁷⁶ and one of the nuns was accused of bad temper and malicious gossip.⁷⁷ She was reported by the royal visitors in 1536 to have borne a child by a priest.⁷⁸ The nuns still seem to have been popular in Chester in the years before the dissolution. They distributed a tenth of their gross income in alms on Maundy Thursday⁷⁹ and were still occasionally remembered in the wills of local people in preference to the Dominicans and Franciscans.⁸⁰ Margaret Hawarden, by her will proved in 1521, left £10 for the 'making of the cloister', £1 to be distributed among the nuns, and individual gifts to the prioress and several of the nuns.⁸¹ Hugh Chamber, who had been steward of the nunnery, asked in 1535 to be buried in the church in front of the image of Our Lady of Pity and left 3s 4d. to each professed nun, 12d. to each novice and 12s. to each of the two chantry priests as well as a silver standing cup to the house.⁸²

In the 15th century the policy of exchanging scattered and isolated pieces of property for lands and tenements in and immediately around Chester continued.⁸³ The nuns probably cultivated some of the land around their house but by the end of the Middle Ages their property in Chester, Handbridge, and Lache was let to many small tenants: in 1526 they had 48 tenants in Handbridge and tenants in most streets in the city, including 24 in Nuns Lane.⁸⁴ Rents from the property, which seems at that period to have been efficiently administered, amounted to more than three-quarters of the total income of the house from temporalities of £74 14s. in 1535.⁸⁵ The income from spiritualities was £25 10s. and the gross income £99 16s. 2d., rather below the average annual income of £130 for English nunneries at that period.⁸⁶ The net income was £66 18s. 4d. out of which annual fees were paid to the chief steward, the earl of Derby, a

receiver or steward, an auditor, and bailiffs in Chester, Waverton, and Saughall.⁸⁷ In the year following the dissolution the nunnery's estates, valued £136 1s. 2d. gross, were, apart from the Welsh churches and a rent from Lathom in Lancashire, entirely in Cheshire. Besides the property in Chester, Lache, and Handbridge, there were rents from salt houses in Middlewich and Nantwich and from small holdings of property in Eccleston, Thornton Hough, Davenham, Willaston, Neston, Rowton, Christleton, Bidston, Over, Heswall, Waverton, Saughall, Nantwich, Northwich, and Middlewich; spiritualities in Cheshire consisted of the rectory of Over and pensions from Budworth chapel and Handley church.⁸⁸

As a priory worth less than £200 the house should have been suppressed under the Act of 1536, but in the following year the prioress paid £160 for exemption.⁸⁹ On 21 January 1540 Elizabeth Grosvenor and the convent surrendered the house and all its possessions to the Crown.⁹⁰ The prioress was assigned a pension of £20, three of the senior nuns pensions of £4, seven other nuns and one of the novices pensions of between £2 13s. 4d. and £2, and the two other novices pensions of £1 6s. 8d.; 12 of those pensions were still paid in 1556 and Elizabeth Grosvenor, 'sometime lady of the nuns', was still alive in the early 1570s.⁹¹ After the dissolution the lands of the nunnery were used to endow the new bishopric of Chester but the site was reserved to the Crown in the grant made to Bishop Bird in 1541.⁹² In 1542 it was granted to Urian Brereton, a groom of the royal chamber, and the Breretons of Handforth occasionally resided at 'The Nunnes'.⁹³ The site was immediately to the north-west of the castle and a late 16th-century plan shows extensive buildings, some of which may have been added after the dissolution. To the north and west of the church, whose dimensions are given as 66 by 45 ft., were buildings arranged round a courtyard; the cloisters (90 by 60 feet) lay on the south side of the church and there were further buildings to the west and east of the cloisters and a chapel (27 by 14 feet) on the south-east side of the cloisters.⁹⁴ The buildings were damaged during the siege of Chester in 1645 by the owner, Sir William Brereton, and only a few ruins remained by the beginning of the 18th century.⁹⁵ A hundred years later the ruins were removed to improve the approach to the new shire hall and several stone coffins and fragments of windows and doorways were unearthed; the arched doorway, still standing in 1816, was removed c. 1840 to the house called St. John's

⁷³ Below, list of prioresses.

⁷⁴ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 44.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 52.

⁷⁶ There was a debt of £40 in 1536: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 141.

⁷⁷ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 128–9.

⁷⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 141.

⁷⁹ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 206.

⁸⁰ *Ch. in Chester*, 98.

⁸¹ *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, ii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] li), 7.

⁸² 3 *Sheaf*, xxi, p. 9.

⁸³ *Hist. MSS. Com.* 22, 11th Rep. VII, *Bridgewater*, p. 138.

⁸⁴ J.C.A.S. N.S. xiii. 103–9; *Ch. in Chester*, 62, 81; B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, ff. 43, 90; 7568, f. 127v. At the dissolution they were paying £3 6s. 8d. to the abbey of Basingwerk for 61 a. of pasture in Lache: *Ch. in Chester*, 62.

⁸⁵ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 206. The total excludes annual royal alms of £26 12s. 2d.: above.

⁸⁶ *Ch. in Chester*, 81; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) v. 206. The return omitted a pension of 13s. 4d. from Handley and probably undervalued the income from Over and the churches in South Wales: *Ch. in Chester*, 69; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 348; *Gastrell, Not. Cest.* i. 52–3.

⁸⁷ *Valor Eccl.* v. 206.

⁸⁸ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 348; P.R.O., E 315/397, pp. 32–3; P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/7385, m. 58.

⁸⁹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 517; xii (1), p. 143; xiii (2), p. 177.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* xv, p. 30.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 348; 3 *Sheaf*, xxi, p. 20.

⁹² *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, p. 536.

⁹³ *Ibid.* xvii, p. 101; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 347; ii. 639, 644–5. For details of armorial bearings in the windows of the house see 3 *Sheaf*, xvi, p. 34.

⁹⁴ The plan (from B.L. Harl. MS. 2073, f. 87) is reproduced in Lysons, *Mag. Brit.* ii (2), 453.

⁹⁵ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 347. For a reproduction of the Buck view of the ruins in 1727 see *ibid.* 359.

A HISTORY OF CHESHIRE

Priory and later re-erected in Grosvenor Park.⁹⁶ The site was excavated in 1964 before the County Police Headquarters was built and the exact dimensions of the church (58 by 43 feet) and the cloisters (55 by 62 feet) were established. Inside the church the foundations of four piers, indicating three central arches, were discovered and, on the evidence of some decorative floor tiles and other sherds, a 13th- or 14th-century date assigned to the remains.⁹⁷

PRIORESSES

M[ary], occurs about 1200.⁹⁸

Lucy, occurs at some time between 1199 and 1216.⁹⁹

Alice, occurs at some time between 1202 and 1229.¹

Alice of Stockport, died 1253.²

Alice de la Haye, elected 1253, died 1283.³

Alice de Pierrepont, occurs 1289–90 and about 1292 or about 1297.⁴

Agatha of Dutton, elected 1306, died 1312.⁵

Alice of Alderslegh, elected 1312.⁶

Emma de Vernon, elected 1316, occurs 1318.⁷

Mary of Chester, occurs 1328, died 1349.⁸

Helewise de Mottershead, elected 1349, occurs until 1355–6.⁹

Mary, occurs 1373.¹⁰

Agnes of Dutton, occurs 1374, died 1386.¹¹

Alice of Doncaster, elected 1386, died 1408.¹²

Elizabeth of Crewe, elected 1408, died 1441.¹³

Alice Leyot, collated 1441, resigned 1449.¹⁴

Beatrice Le Heyre, appointed 1449, occurs 1458.¹⁵
Ellen Blundell, occurs 1459, died 1473.¹⁶
Joan Brett, appointed 1473, died 1476.¹⁷
Elizabeth Rixton, appointed 1476, died 1490.¹⁸
Margery Pasmyche, elected 1491, died 1525.¹⁹
Margery Tayllour, elected 1525, occurs until 1533.²⁰

Elizabeth Grosvenor, occurs from 1534, surrendered the priory in 1540.²¹

Three seals of the house are known. The first,²² which was in use at the beginning of the 13th century, is a pointed oval depicting what was possibly the west end of the church with a doorway under a central tower and two small flanking towers. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM ECCLESIE MONIALIS CESTRIE.

The second,²³ in use in the second half of the 12th century, is a pointed oval about 3 by 2 in. It depicts the Virgin crowned and seated on a throne, with feet on a projecting foot board, with the Child on her left knee and a sceptre in her right hand. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM CONVEN . . . MONIALIUM CESTRIE.

The third,²⁴ a common seal in use at the dissolution, is a pointed oval 2½ by 1½ in. It depicts the Virgin crowned and seated in a canopied niche with tabernacle work at the sides, with the Child, with crown and nimbus, standing on her left knee; she holds a sceptre in her right hand and in the base, under a round-headed arch, is a prioress kneeling in prayer. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM COMMUNE PRIORISSE ET CONVENTUS MONIALIUM SANCTE MARIE CESTRIE.

HOUSES OF CISTERCIAN MONKS

THE ABBEY OF COMBERMERE

THE Savignac abbey at Combermere, dedicated to St. Mary and St. Michael, was founded in 1133²⁵ by Hugh

Malbank, second baron of Wich Malbank, whose father had founded the hospital of St. Nicholas in Nantwich.²⁶ The foundation charter was witnessed by Ranulph II, earl of Chester, whom Malbank wished

⁹⁶ Ibid. 348; 3 *Sheaf*, xvi, 30.

⁹⁷ S. M. Rutland, 'St. Mary's Nunnery, Chester, 1964: An Interim Report', J.C.A.S. lii, 27–8, 32.

⁹⁸ J.C.A.S. n.s. x, 16.

⁹⁹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, f. 42; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts*, 5 (for dates of William Pincerna).

¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2063, f. 61; 3 *Sheaf*, xlvi, pp. 15, 22.

² Wood, *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, i, 34–5. She was possibly elected in 1246: *Cal. Pat.* 1232–47, 482.

³ *Cal. Pat.* 1247–58, 221–2; 1281–92, 84. She was subprioress. Matilda de la Hay, prioress, who occurs c. 1256 (J.C.A.S. n.s. x, 25) may be the same woman.

⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, xix, p. 61; xxiii, p. 48; B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 190; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i, 347.

⁵ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/1, f. 10v.; *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 492.

⁶ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/1, f. 32v.; *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 503. A member of the convent.

⁷ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/1, f. 62v.; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 117.

⁸ Chester City R.O., MR 2/30, m. 5; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 123v.

⁹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 123v.; 28 *D.K.R.* 57.

¹⁰ 3 *Sheaf*, vii, p. 32.

¹¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2101, f. 35v.; 36 *D.K.R.* 94.

¹² Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/6, f. 52; B/A/1/7, f. 96v.

¹³ Ibid. B/A/1/7, f. 96v.; B/A/1/9, f. 125v. A member of the

house.

¹⁴ Ibid. B/A/1/9, f. 125v.; *Cal. Pat.* 1446–52, 259. Subprioress.

¹⁵ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/10, f. 29; 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 53. Subprioress.

¹⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 53; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, f. 107.

¹⁷ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, ff. 107v., 110v. Subprioress.

¹⁸ Ibid. B/A/1/12, f. 110v.; 37 *D.K.R.* 143. Subprioress.

¹⁹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/13, f. 121v.; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, iv(1), p. 704.

²⁰ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, iv (1), p. 704; *Ch. in Chester*, 180. She was still a member of the house in 1540: *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xv, p. 551.

²¹ *Ch. in Chester*, 180; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xv, p. 30.

²² J.C.A.S. n.s. x, 16 and plate facing.

²³ Ibid. plate facing p. 16, 28; Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 504. Birch dates this seal (no. 2917) to the 12th cent. and ascribes a similar seal (no. 2918) to the house on insufficient evidence.

²⁴ J.C.A.S. [1st ser.], i, plate facing p. 149; Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, pp. 504–5 (where it is dated to the late 14th cent.).

²⁵ This date of foundation is given in *Ann. Cestr.* 21 and in the Dieulacres (Staffs.) chron. (3 *Sheaf*, lii, p. 19) and is accepted by L. Janauschek, *Origines Cisterciensium*, i, 100.

²⁶ Below, hospital of St. Nicholas.

to be regarded as the principal founder and protector of the new abbey and to participate with his heirs in its spiritual benefits, and by Roger de Clinton, bishop of Coventry,²⁷ who himself founded another Savignac house at Buildwas (Salop.) two years later.²⁸ Hugh Malbank gave for the construction of the house a wooded site on a mere at the extreme southern edge of Cheshire and most of the lands acquired by the house, at its foundation or later, were within a few miles of Combermere, on the boundaries of Cheshire, Shropshire, and Staffordshire. In addition to the site Hugh Malbank donated land nearby which he said he had perambulated: the manor of Wilkesley, the vill of Royal and Lodmore and adjacent land at Burleydam, the vill of Dodcott and its wood, the mill at Chorley with its pool and fishery, and the woods of 'Brende-wood', 'Light Birchwood' and Butterley Heys. He also gave the churches of Sandon and Alstonfield in Staffordshire and the neighbouring church of Acton with its chapel of Nantwich; also a quarter of Nantwich with the tithe of his salt and salt pans there and a supply of salt for the monks. They were also to have their own court, common pasture in his woods, pastures throughout Cheshire with the right to take timber for building and firewood except in his forest of Coole, and free passage throughout his lands.²⁹ The charter was witnessed by Malbank's son, William, who later confirmed his father's gifts and added further land in Wilkesley, with Ditchley and the mill of 'Chelyleye' (Brooks Mill)³⁰ in the same area.³¹ At its foundation, or soon after, the house received further land from the friends and associates of Hugh Malbank: William FitzAlan, who was also a benefactor of Buildwas Abbey, gave Dodecote in Childs Ercall (Salop.) probably before his exile in 1138;³² Robert de Ferrers, earl of Derby, a noted monastic benefactor, gave, with his son William, land at Newton in Ashbourne and Cotes in Hartington (both Derb.);³³ Ivo Pantulf and his son Brice gave Broomhall, 'Shipford' (Shifford's Grange) and 'Clive' (Cliff Grange in Sutton) on the borders of Staffordshire and Shropshire;³⁴ William FitzRanulph of Whitchurch (Salop.) gave land adjoining that of William Malbank at Brankelow near

Combermere.³⁵ Richard Peche, bishop of Coventry (1161–82) licensed the appropriation of the churches of Sandon, Alstonfield and Acton with its chapels, probably in the early 1180s after the initial endowments to establish the house had ceased.³⁶ In the first half of the 13th century further but smaller benefactions were received and the abbey also increased its lands near Combermere by gifts, purchases, and leases. Ranulph III, earl of Chester, during whose minority alms of £2 a year had been paid to the monks of Combermere, gave land at Wincle in his forest of Macclesfield to establish a grange with pasture for a specified number of sheep, cattle, horses, and mares and he, or possibly his grandfather, gave the monks the right to a fishing boat on the Dee at Chester.³⁷ Roger, lord of Ightfield (Salop.) relinquished his claim to Threapwood which bordered on Wilkesley and also gave land in Ightfield and half of the church there, a grant only partially effective.³⁸ Gilbert de Macclesfield and James de Audley made grants in Baddiley and Newhall³⁹ and Robert de Baskerville added land at Aston in Stone and Yarlet to the house's Staffordshire estates.⁴⁰ The abbey increased its Shropshire holdings by buying the manor of Chesthill in Moreton Say from Richard de Chesthull⁴¹ and leasing the manor of Drayton in Hales from the abbey of Saint-Evroul (Orne).⁴²

The abbey's first century was apparently marked by moderate success and expansion, to judge by the number of its filiations and the activities of its abbots. Within twenty years of its foundation a daughter house had been established by William, first abbot of Combermere, at Poulton on a site provided by Robert the Butler. It was moved to Dieulacres (Staffs.) in 1214.⁴³ An attempt at the same period by the abbey to settle monks at Church Preen in Shropshire was less successful; the prior of Wenlock was accused of expelling the monks and carrying off their livestock and all their goods, and Combermere failed to maintain its claim, in spite of the intervention of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁴ In 1154 the daughter houses of Combermere allegedly included not only Poulton but also the abbeys of St. Mary's, Dublin, and Basing-

²⁷ The charter survives only as a copy: B.L. Cotton Faustina B. viii, f. 125v.; Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 323–4. Its contents are not suspect, although there are doubts about the authenticity of some of the Combermere charters: Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 2; 3 *Sheaf.* xvi, p. 27; below.

²⁸ V.C.H. Salop. ii. 51.

²⁹ Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 323–4. ³⁰ P.N. Ches. iii. 95.

³¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 3868, ff. 6v.–7.

³² Cal. Chart. R. 1226–57, 428; V.C.H. Salop. ii. 51.

³³ Cal. Chart. R. 1226–57, 428; 1327–41, 204; *Complete Peerage*, iv. 191–2. The abbot later purchased extensive pasture rights from Wm. de Ferrers: 3 *Sheaf.* xxviii, p. 59.

³⁴ Cal. Chart. R. 1226–57, 428; 1327–41, 204; *Liber Niger Scaccarii, Staffordscira*, (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] i), 227; R. W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Salop.* viii. 52.

³⁵ Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 326; 3 *Sheaf.* xxviii, p. 9; Eyton, *Salop.* x. 18.

³⁶ B.L. Harl. MS. 3868, ff. 6v.–7; Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 326. A charter of Ranulph III dated 1230 names Nantwich, Wrenbury, and Church Minshull as chapels of Acton: Shrewsbury Public Libr. Deed 96.

³⁷ *Ches. in Pipe R.* 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18; B.L. Add. Ch. 15771. The right to a boat on the Dee which, together with the pasture rights at Wincle, was claimed in 1499 (3 *Sheaf.* xxx, p. 17) was confirmed as the gift of Earl Ranulph by

Hen. III in 1253; he also confirmed all the gifts, alms, and liberties granted to the monks by Ranulph II, Hugh II, and Ranulph III: Cal. Chart. R. 1226–57, 428. Grants of fishing rights in the Dee by the lords of Bromfield and Overton (Salop.) appear only in a 1331 confirmation of a spurious charter of confirmation by Edw. I and are themselves highly suspect in form: Cal. Chart. R. 1327–41, 205.

³⁸ Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 326; Cal. Chart. R. 1327–41, 204; Cur. Reg. R. xiii, p. 177; P.N. Ches. iii. 94; 3 *Sheaf.* xxviii, p. 25; Eyton, *Salop.* ix. 211–12. In 1291 the abbey was receiving a pension of 2s. from Ightfield church: Tax. Eccl. (Rec. Com.), 245.

³⁹ 3 *Sheaf.* xx, pp. 57–8; xxviii, pp. 16, 18.

⁴⁰ Cal. Chart. R. 1226–57, 428; *Hist. Pirehill Hundred* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. N.S. xii), 114; Cur. Reg. R. x, p. 292; xi, pp. 120, 127; Wm. Salt Libr., Stafford, S.D. Salt, 17.

⁴¹ Eyton, *Salop.* viii. 201–4; Cal. Chart. R. 1226–57, 152.

⁴² Cal. Chart. R. 1327–41, 204; Eyton, *Salop.* ix. 185–7. ⁴³ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 1; V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 230. Barraclough (*Early Ches. Charts.* 2–3) dates the foundation charter to 1146 but others favour 1153: *ibid.* 2; V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 230, 231n.

⁴⁴ *Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, 152–3; V.C.H. Salop. ii. 19, 38.

werk (Flints.); in 1156, however, St. Mary's was assigned as a daughter house to Buildwas abbey by the General Chapter of the Cistercian order and the filiation of Basingwerk was similarly changed in 1157.⁴⁵ In 1178 Combermere acquired a new daughter house when John the Constable founded Stanlow probably with Combermere monks; relations between the two houses remained close, if not always harmonious, even after the convent of Stanlow was transferred to Whalley in Lancashire.⁴⁶ In 1219 another daughter house of Combermere was founded by Henry de Audley at Hulton in Staffordshire.⁴⁷ Relations between religious houses in the same region were not always friendly; between 1191 and 1252 the abbots of Combermere were involved in disputes with the abbots of Merevale (Warws.), Croxden (Staffs.), Dieulacres (Staffs.), and Buildwas (Salop.)⁴⁸ and are also found visiting other Cistercian houses or arbitrating in their quarrels, particularly those between Welsh houses.⁴⁹ In 1220 the abbot of Combermere was denounced to the General Chapter for building against orders;⁵⁰ that is the only surviving reference to the building of the abbey although between 1266 and 1271 Robert, a lay brother of Combermere, was keeper of the works for Henry III and c. 1300 another monk, Thomas the Plumber, was paid for work on Chester and Beeston castles.⁵¹ During the 13th century the abbey was much involved, as were most religious houses, in litigation over its estates, often with the heirs of the original benefactors or their under-tenants.⁵² In 1237 the abbot and convent sold their land at Tillington (Staffs.) to Richard de Draycot, justice of Chester, for 40 marks and some years later they exchanged their tithes in Worleston for those owned by Chester abbey in Austerson, Baddington, and Broomhall.⁵³ In 1245 they were granted a market and fair on their manor of Drayton, after a royal visit to Combermere.⁵⁴ Granges were established at Dodcott, Ditchley, Smeaton, and Heyfields (in Wilkesley) and at Wincle, Shifford, Cliff, Chesthill, Newton, and Yarlet;⁵⁵ there is some evidence of the abbey's involvement in sheep-farming and

wool production though little indication of scale or success. In the mid 13th century the abbey was leasing pasture for 300 sheep a year in Hartington (Derb.) and in 1253 it secured the privilege that its sheep should not be distrained for debt so long as there were other goods available.⁵⁶ About 1300 Combermere was selling its wool at Boston (Lincs.) fair and also producing it for sale abroad, though not on the same scale as neighbouring Cistercian houses⁵⁷ and in 1313 the abbot acknowledged that his house owed eleven sacks of wool to John Wyndeloke, merchant of Ypres.⁵⁸

Such evidence of routine activity but faintly indicates that the abbey was entering a long financial crisis in the mid 13th century. Little appears to have been amiss in 1231 when Abbot Stephen of Lexington visited the English filiations of Savigny; Combermere received statutes regulating internal discipline identical to those issued to Buildwas, Byland (Yorks. N.R.), and Quarr (I.W.) abbeys and nothing was singled out for special censure.⁵⁹ By 1275, however, the abbey had fallen heavily into debt: the sheriff of Shropshire was ordered to respite all demands for taxes and Robert Burnell, bishop of Bath and Wells, was given custody of the abbey during pleasure.⁶⁰ In 1276 it was taken into royal protection for a year, extended to two in 1277.⁶¹ In 1281 sinister reports reached the General Chapter of the Cistercian order about the abbot's behaviour and he was ordered to submit to the authority of the Chapter.⁶² The reports doubtless concerned the violent quarrel between Combermere and Saint-Évroul over the advowson of Drayton during which the abbot and six of his fellow monks prevented the archbishop of Canterbury entering Drayton church; he complained that they defended it like a castle and put them under a sentence of excommunication and interdict.⁶³ In 1283 the monks were excused from contributing victuals for the Welsh campaign as they had insufficient food for their own needs and the abbey was again taken into custody; its custodians were ordered to apply its revenues to the payment of its debts, after allowing the abbot and convent reasonable

⁴⁵ E. Martène and V. Durand, *Thesaurus Novus Artedotorum* (1717), i. 433–4; V.C.H. Salop. ii. 51.

⁴⁶ *Whalley Coucher Bk.* i (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] x), 5; J. Jauschek, *Origines Cisterciensium*, i. 100; T. D. Whitaker, *Hist. Whalley* (4th edn.), i. 90n., 122n.; V.C.H. Lancs. ii. 131; below.

⁴⁷ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 235.

⁴⁸ J. Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis* 1116–1786, i. 137, 153, 527; ii. 241, 333. For disputes in 1233 and 1252 over *vicinitas grangiorum* with the abbeys of Buildwas and Dieulacres see also V.C.H. Salop. ii. 52n.; Staffs. iii. 232.

⁴⁹ Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, i. 239, 281, 364, 446; ii. 46, 119, 199, 382. In 1242 the abbot and convent arbitrated in a quarrel between Hulton Abbey and Trentham Priory: *Trentham Chart.* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] xi), 314–15.

⁵⁰ Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, i. 527.

⁵¹ 3 *Sheaf*, viii, p. 11; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 42, 44; *Building Accounts of Hen. III*, ed. H. M. Colvin, 420, 422, 426, 428.

⁵² *Cur. Reg. R.* i, p. 454; x, p. 292; xi, pp. 120, 127; Wm. Salt Libr., Stafford, S.D. Salt, 17; S.D. Cooke, 2; *Staffs. Plea Rolls* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] iv(1)), 93, 107, 240; *Cal. Final Concords* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 1911), 52; Eyton, *Salop.* viii, 12–14; ix. 211–12; x. 20–1.

⁵³ Staffs. R. O., D.(W.) 1721/1/1, ff. 29, 33; *Cart. Chester*

Abbey, ii, pp. 285–6.

⁵⁴ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226–57, 289; *Close R.* 1242–7, 368. This grant was 'improved' by the addition of other privileges in 1331 (*Cal. Chart. R.* 1327–41, 203) and a spurious charter of 1282 granting judicial rights in the manor of Drayton was confirmed in 1429 and 1478: *Cal. Pat.* 1422–9, 535–6; 1476–85, 114.

⁵⁵ *Tax. Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), 252, 258, 261, 263; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.) v. 216; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv(2), p. 33; *Cal. Chester. Co. Ct. R.* 68; P.R.O., SC 8/99/4918; 3 *Sheaf*, xxviii, p. 18.

⁵⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, xx, p. 44; xxviii, p. 59; *Rydeware Chart.* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] xvi), 257; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226–57, 427.

⁵⁷ *Cal. Chanc. R. Var.* 272; W. Cunningham, *Growth of Eng. Industry and Commerce* (5th edn.), i. 632; V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 227.

⁵⁸ *Cal. Close*, 1313–18, 68.

⁵⁹ V.C.H. Salop. ii. 54.

⁶⁰ *Cal. Close*, 1272–9, 146; *Cal. Pat.* 1272–81, 103.

⁶¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1272–81, 170, 247.

⁶² Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, iii. 216. The abbot went 'beyond seas', presumably to attend the General Chapter, in 1282: *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 29.

⁶³ *Reg. Pecham* (Cant. & York Soc.), i. 147, 175–6; ii. 180; *Reg. Epist. J. Peckham* (Rolls Ser.), ii. 427, 429, 432–3; Eyton, *Salop.* ix. 189–90.

maintenance.⁶⁴ Bishop Burnell paid £213 6s. 8d. to help relieve the financial problems of the house and acquired in exchange its lands in Monks Coppenhall.⁶⁵ Matters had not improved by the beginning of the 14th century when there is evidence not only of the impoverished state of the abbey but also of the involvement of its members in local disorder. In March 1309 Richard of Fullshurst and others of Nantwich assaulted the abbot in the town, killed the prior, burnt the abbey's houses, and carried off goods worth £200. On the complaint of the abbot a commission of oyer and terminer was appointed to deal with the incident but while the case was still pending Fullshurst and his accomplices broke into the abbot's house, attacked him and his servants, killed three of his horses, and stole £60. Fullshurst evidently appealed to the abbot of Savigny who appointed visitors to investigate accusations against the abbot; Edward II asked the visitors to desist in their attempts to remove the abbot and annul his complaint to the royal commissioners, especially as the abbot could not return to the abbey because of the ambushes laid by his opponents.⁶⁶ The final outcome of this four-sided dispute is not known but it may have inaugurated a long-lasting feud as the abbot of Combermere was accused in 1360 of leading an attack on the property of Sir Robert Fullshurst.⁶⁷ Attempts by the commissioners of the abbot of Savigny to deal with such local disputes seem to have been singularly ineffective: in 1344 the General Chapter heard that visitors had been terrorized by armed men into removing the abbot from his office and that the abbots of Combermere and Whalley (Lancs.) had been attacked while visiting Hulton (Staffs.).⁶⁸ In 1365 the abbot of Combermere attempted to depose the abbot of Whalley and for a while held Whalley against the sheriff and the *posse comitatus*.⁶⁹

The financial problems of Combermere had exacerbated relations with its daughter house of Whalley. The mother house had the duty of partitioning contributions imposed by the General Chapter among its generation and in 1318 the abbot of Whalley complained that his house had been required by the abbot of Combermere to pay as much as the combined contributions of Combermere, Dieulacres, and Hulton towards a levy of £212. In the investigations which followed the annual revenues of Combermere were estimated at £130 14s. 11d.⁷⁰ In 1314 the abbot had leased Cotes Grange for 28 years to the abbot of Burton in return for the discharge of a debt of over £800⁷¹ and in the following year the Crown once again took the abbey into custody 'on account of its poverty

and miserable state'. The keepers were ordered, once reasonable allowance had been made to maintain the abbot and convent, to use the revenues to meet debts and repair the buildings on the advice of some of the 'more discreet' of the house; during the period of custody no royal official, or any other outsider, was to be lodged in the abbey without the keepers' permission. The abbey was still in custody in 1321 when the royal protection was renewed.⁷² In 1328 the abbot and convent petitioned the king for sufficient resources to maintain hospitality and complained that their poverty was due to the previous abbot's mismanagement; in response Combermere was taken into royal custody yet again and the custodians were ordered to advise the abbot on using the revenues of the house to meet its debts.⁷³ Although the custody order contained the usual provision that no one was to lodge in the abbey or on its manors or to take away any of its goods without the custodians' consent, it may not have been very effective since several of the abbey's charters seem to have been 'improved' at that time in preparation for confirmation in 1331; most of the embellishments concerned the exclusion of officials from the estates of the house.⁷⁴ In their petition for royal help the abbot and convent attributed their poverty to the policy of leasing out lands and it seems that from c. 1300 many of the community's estates had been leased, sometimes on disadvantageous terms. The manor of Chesthill was leased from 1305 with rents paid in a combination of crops and cash; in 1325 it was leased for 26 years with the lessee obliged to find hospitality for the monks but in 1334 it was assigned to the canons of Haughmond (Salop.) for 29 years, possibly as security for debts owed by Combermere.⁷⁵ The leasing of estates continued in the mid 14th century⁷⁶ and so did the financial problems of the house.⁷⁷ In 1335 the abbey was licensed to appropriate Childs Ercall church⁷⁸ and in 1355 it acquired the advowson of Baddiley from William de Praers in exchange for Baddiley Grange.⁷⁹ William de Praers had also farmed Wincle Grange but in 1354 the lease was taken over by the Black Prince and the grange restored to the abbot and convent on condition that they worked it themselves.⁸⁰ Royal assistance was not obtained without cost: the abbey contributed to the expenses of the marriage of the king's sister in 1333 and lent money for the French expedition in 1347;⁸¹ in 1359 the Black Prince asked for the office of porter for one of his servants;⁸² the abbey was asked to provide a corrody for a royal pensioner in 1312 and another for a dependant of the Black Prince in 1362.⁸³ The last request, and the

⁶⁴ *Cal. Chanc. R. Var.* 264-5; *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 78.

⁶⁵ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 328. The land in Monks Coppenhall had been given before c. 1275-8 by John Mere and his wife, the dau. of Brice of Leighton (*ibid.*). For other transactions with the Burnell fam. at this period see *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 72; 1292-1301, 142; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 338.

⁶⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1307-13, 128, 170-1; *Cal. Close*, 1307-13, 157.

⁶⁷ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 383-4.

⁶⁸ Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, iii. 481.

⁶⁹ *V.C.H. Lancs.* ii. 136.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 135; Whitaker, *Hist. Whalley*, i. 175-8. For revenues in 1291 see *Tax. Eccl. (Rec. Com.)*, 242-3, 245, 252, 258, 261, 263.

⁷¹ 3 *Sheaf*, xxviii, p. 59.

⁷² *Cal. Pat.* 1313-17, 256, 347; 1321-4, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 1327-30, 302; *P.R.O.*, SC 8/39/1948.

⁷⁴ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1327-41, 202-6; above.

⁷⁵ *P.R.O.*, SC 8/39/1948; 8/99/4918; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* ii, p. 47; 3 *Sheaf*, xxii, p. 19; *V.C.H. Salop.* ii. 65. For leases of Yarlet see *Cal. Inq. Misc.* ii, p. 175; *Cal. Close*, 1323-7, 55.

⁷⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, xxviii, p. 86; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* iii, p. 5; *P.R.O.*, SC 8/244/15406; *Cal. Pat.* 1345-8, 93.

⁷⁷ Between 1345 and 1360 41 titles were granted by Combermere to candidates for orders in the diocese of Hereford; cf. *Vale Royal* (2); *Norton* (11); *Birkenhead* (1); *Reg. Trilleck* (Cant. & York Soc.), 40-632.

⁷⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1334-8, 77. It is not known how or when the advowson was acquired: *Eyton, Salop.* viii. 12-14, 19.

⁷⁹ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii, 193, 205-6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 147, 169.

⁸¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1330-4, 422; 1345-8, 340.

⁸² *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 337.

⁸³ *Cal. Close*, 1307-13, 548; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 447-8.

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corrodian's behaviour, caused the community some concern. Although they sought an assurance that it would not be repeated, that assurance was disregarded in 1386 when Richard II nominated a replacement.⁸⁴

There were ten monks, including the abbot, at Combermere in 1379 and 1381.⁸⁵ The house was under royal protection, but not in custody, in 1383 when it successfully defended its right to the appropriation of Acton, Sandon, and Alstonfield churches against the bishop's commissary.⁸⁶ There were problems of internal discipline: in 1385 one of the monks was accused of stealing from the abbot and in the following year the General Chapter sought the help of royal officials in arresting the same monk who was said to be vagabond, apostate and obdurate.⁸⁷ By 1410 the abbey was once more so heavily in debt that it was said that the monks would have nothing left to live on if they satisfied their creditors. In 1414 the abbot was accused of counterfeiting gold coins. The debts were blamed on the bad administration of former abbots who had sold too much timber and allowed the buildings to become so dilapidated that it would cost £1,000 to repair them. In 1412 Henry, prince of Wales, took the abbey into his own hands and entrusted it to the chamberlain and escheator of Chester; in the following year three more palatinate officials were appointed to administer the estates of the house to relieve its members.⁸⁸ In 1416 Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, the chamberlain, and the escheator were given the custody of the abbey.⁸⁹ In the following year Roger Hoggesson of Holyhurst and Richard Tenche of Lodmore were accused of holding the abbey by force against the orders of the king and the will of the abbot, attacking royal officials, and carrying off into Shropshire the goods of the abbey, including four Bibles, three large volumes of the 'Psalms of St. Augustine' and 'books of St. Gregory and St. Bernard', stolen from the library and valued at £100. They were also accused of stealing and using the abbey's common seal. Hoggesson and Tenche were acquitted but the facts that Hoggesson and one of the monks were later outlawed at the suit of the king and that the abbot was removed indicate internal feuds during the period of custody.⁹⁰ The troubles of the house evidently continued although there were no further royal attempts to deal with its financial problems before the dissolution. In 1435 John Kingsley, one of the abbey's tenants in Nantwich, was accused of extorting money from the abbot for many years and, more seriously, Abbot Richard Alderwas was killed by a labourer at Dodcott in 1446.⁹¹ In 1496 the house was exempted from clerical taxation on the grounds of poverty.⁹² Property in the abbey's quarter

of Nantwich was leased out at low rents for periods of 99 or 101 years during the later 15th century and although the length of leases of that and other property was reduced in the early 16th century, there is no other sign of increased efficiency or changes in policy.⁹³

Combermere's reputation for indiscipline and involvement in local disorder continued until the dissolution. In 1520 one of the abbot's servants murdered one of the monks and it was alleged by the dead man's brother that the prior refused to make the murder public, 'saying, "This abbey is already in an evil name for using of misrule"'; all concerned were sworn to secrecy and the murderer was concealed in the abbey for more than six months.⁹⁴ In 1528 the abbot's behaviour was reported to Thomas Cromwell and he was warned of the danger to the monastery if a 'discreet head' was not soon put in charge.⁹⁵ A rather different picture of the state of the monastery in its last years is provided by the chance survival of the letter book of Robert Joseph, a monk of Evesham Abbey. Between late 1530 and early 1532 Joseph conducted a lengthy and affectionate correspondence with Humphrey Chester, a monk of Combermere, thanks to the services of an itinerant fishmonger (*volitans piscivendulus*).⁹⁶ Chester had several friends at Evesham, apart from Joseph, with whom he exchanged books, small gifts, and visits, and one of his brothers was a scholar in the Evesham almonry before becoming a secular priest. Chester, who emerges from the correspondence as a monk with a reputation for virtue, piety, and charity, was evidently an avid reader of the scriptures, going 'hither and thither among the flowers of scripture like a bee'; although he was ashamed that he could only write to Joseph in the vernacular, he could evidently understand Joseph's complex Latin. There are some references in Joseph's letters which might indicate Chester's concern at the state of his house: Joseph was glad that his friend was not embittered by misfortune and, in February 1532, rejoiced that Chester now led a quiet life with only one adversary sent to exercise his virtue.⁹⁷

The returns of 1535 show that the abbey had a gross income of £258 6s. 6d. That suggests that the successive financial crises were caused by mismanagement rather than insufficient endowment. Income from temporal possessions amounted to £181 2s. 10d. and from spiritualities to £77 3s. 8d.⁹⁸ The valuation was probably reasonably accurate since after the dissolution the total revenues were estimated at £268 8s. 4½d.⁹⁹ The net income in 1535 was £225 9s. 7d. after disbursements which included £12 13s. 4d. for alms distributed annually, fees to the steward, an auditor, and bailiffs in Alstonfield and Newton, Nantwich,

⁸⁴ *Bk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 448; *Cal. Close*, 1385-9, 253.

⁸⁵ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 22; *Traditio*, II. 195.

⁸⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1381-5, 228; *2nd Reg. Stretton*, 148.

⁸⁷ *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/8, rot. 21d.; *Cal. Pat.* 1385-9, 178.

⁸⁸ 36 *D.K.R.* 120; 37 *D.K.R.* 160; *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/11, rot. 7d.; *Cal. Pat.* 1413-15, 73; 1 *Sheaf*, p. 49.

⁸⁹ 37 *D.K.R.* 160.

⁹⁰ 3 *Sheaf*, xxiv, p. 58; *P.R.O.*, CHES 29/122, rott. 15, 16, 18; below, list of abbots.

⁹¹ *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/12, rot. 32; *Bk. of Abbot of Combermere*, in *Misc. Relating to Lancs. and Ches.* ii. (R.S.L.C. xxxi), 45; 3 *Sheaf*, xxix, pp. 17-18.

⁹² *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/13, f. 196.

⁹³ *Bk. of Abbot of Combermere*, 6-7, 10-12; *Wm. Salt Libr.*, Stafford, S.D. Cooke, 202; 3 *Sheaf*, xlix, pp. 3-4, 6,

8-9, 39.

⁹⁴ *Lancs. and Ches. Cases in Star Chamber*, i. 129. The 'paper of a certain murder done by the abbot of Combermere' mentioned in the state papers in 1534 is possibly connected with the incident: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, p. 346.

⁹⁵ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (3), pp. 3176-7.

⁹⁶ *Letter Bk. of Rob. Joseph*, 1530-3 (*Oxf. Hist. Soc. N.S.* xix), pp. xxiii, 84, 146. Humph. Chester took orders in 1525-6 (*Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/14ii) and may have been the Humph. Lightfote listed in the deed of surrender: 8 *D.K.R.* 17.

⁹⁷ *Letter Bk. of Rob. Joseph*, pp. liv, 84, 137, 146, 154, 163-4, 185, 187-8, 190-2, 194, 196, 214, 240.

⁹⁸ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 216-17.

⁹⁹ Chester City R.O., CR 72/7.

Drayton, and Wilkesley, and £5 19s. 9d. for rents.¹ The royal visitors in 1536 found that the debts of the house amounted to £160.² At that period most of the abbey's estates were leased out for long terms, and several such were made within a few months of the surrender.³ The abbot displeased Thomas Cromwell, who had requested the lease of the parsonage of Childs Ercall for one of his servants, when he had to explain that the lease had already been granted to a servant of the earl of Shrewsbury, the abbey's steward for 40 years.⁴ In May 1538 the abbot was summoned to London to surrender the monastery; he wrote to Cromwell that, although he had received his office from the king and Cromwell and was willing to give it up when it pleased them, he hoped that he and his brethren might be allowed to continue in the monastery.⁵ Although the abbot went to London armed with a letter from Bishop Rowland Lee, President of the Council of the Welsh Marches, commending him 'for his gentle entertainment of me and others of the council', the abbey was surrendered on 27 July 1538.⁶ Thirteen monks, including the abbot, signed the deed of surrender and were awarded pensions.⁷ No inventory of the contents of the abbey, apart from a list of bedding and kitchen utensils,⁸ survives. After they passed to the Crown⁹ the possessions of the abbey consisted of in Cheshire: the manor of Wilkesley, with land in Heyfields, Dodcott, Ditchley, and Lodmore; land and rents in Poole and Nantwich (including salt houses); Winkle Grange; the appropriated church of Acton with its chapels of Wrenbury, Church Minshall, and Nantwich and tithes in Audlem, Aston, and Leighton parishes; in Shropshire: the manor of Drayton, Cliff, Shifford's and Chesthill Granges, lands and rents at Dodecote, Ternhill, Longford and Wollerton and the appropriated church of Childs Ercall; in Staffordshire: Yarlet Grange and the appropriated churches of Sandon and Alstonfield; in Derbyshire: Cotes and Newton Granges. In addition pensions were received from the churches of Ightfield, Great Bolas and Draycott and from Dieulacres abbey, Chester priory and the Carmelites of Chester. In August 1539 the monastery, with the church, steeple, and

graveyard, and its lands were granted to George Cotton, an esquire of the body, and his wife.¹⁰ A house was built by the Cottons on the site.¹¹ The abbey buildings lay on a level terrace on a south-facing hill-slope. The claustral buildings were south of the church and the surviving portions, which are now incorporated in the house, are the south cloister and adjacent rooms, including those at the south-west corner which were probably kitchens, and a short length of the east range. The decoratively timber-framed upper storey of the south range includes in its eastern part the late medieval refectory which has a hammer-beam roof with the arms of the abbey on each main spandrel. Abutting the east end of the south side of the refectory a smaller room may have been the misericord.

ABBOTS

William, the first abbot, occurs at some time between 1146 and 1153.¹²

Geoffrey, occurs at some time between 1149–50 and 1155.¹³

Walter, occurs at some time between c. 1162 and 1167.¹⁴

John, occurs between c. 1172 and c. 1190.¹⁵

Thomas de Gillyng, occurs between 1200 and 1228.¹⁶

Robert, occurs at some time between 1230 and 1232.¹⁷

Richard, occurs 1237.¹⁸

Simon, occurs between c. 1237 and 1245.¹⁹

William de Waresley, occurs 1256.²⁰

Richard, occurs 1279.²¹

Adam, occurs between 1289 and 1300.²²

William of Leigh, occurs 1305, 1306.²³

Robert, occurs 1310.²⁴

Richard of Rudyard, died 1316.²⁵

Adam, occurs 1320.²⁶

Nicholas of Tugby, occurs between 1324 and 1338.²⁷

Roger Lyndley, occurs between 1339 and 1344, dead by 1348.²⁸

apparently deposed in 1201 (*Cur. Reg. R. i. 454*) but either he or another Thos. was abbot in 1203–4: *Cal. Letters Innocent III concerning Eng. and Wales*, ed. C. R. and M. G. Cheney, p. 89; Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 131; *Cal. Pat.* 1225–32, 223.

¹⁷ *Staffs. Chart.* 1200–1327 (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 1911), 423; *Staffs. R. O., D.(W.)* 1721/1/1, f. 29.

¹⁸ *Staffs. R. O., D.(W.)* 1721/1/1, f. 33.

¹⁹ *Trentham Chart.* 314–15; *Staffs. Chart.* 425; 3 *Sheaf*, xxxv, p. 57; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1226–57, 289.

²⁰ *Eyton, Salop.* x. 21. He was dead by 1263; *ibid.* viii. 13.

²¹ *Staffs. Plea Rolls* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] vi(1)), 93.

²² *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 318; 1292–1301, 529.

²³ *Staffs. Plea Rolls* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. [1st ser.] vii(1)), 126–7; Whitaker, *Hist. Whalley*, i. 90n.

²⁴ *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 213.

²⁵ He had been a monk of Stanlow and Whalley: B.L. Cotton MS. Titus F. iii, f. 261v.

²⁶ Whitaker, *Hist. Whalley*, i. 93.

²⁷ 36 D.K.R. 119; Hist. MSS. Com. 13, 10th Rep. IV, Kilmory, p. 360; B.L. Cotton MS. Faustina B. vi, f. 92v. He was previously abbot of Hulton: V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 237.

²⁸ B.L. Harl. MS. 2072, f. 69; P.R.O., SC 8/244/15406; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* iii. 5. He had been a monk of Whalley: Whitaker, *Hist. Whalley*, i. 112. He was briefly removed from office in, or just before 1344: Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, iii. 481.

¹ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 217. For a full list of fees (many to local gentry families) and corrodies totalling £106 see P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/407.

² *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 143.

³ *Ibid.* xiv(1), pp. 589–90; 39 D.K.R. 76; 3 *Sheaf*, xlix, p. 3.

⁴ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, pp. 77, 106, 183.

⁵ *Ibid.* xiii(1), p. 353. ⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 397, 546.

⁷ 8 D.K.R. 17; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv(2), p. 599. In Nov. 1538 the abbot and 9 monks were dispensed, with a change of habit, to hold benefices: *Faculty Off. Regs.*, ed. D. S. Chambers, 154.

⁸ Chester City R. O., CR 72/7.

⁹ P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/7384, mm. 70–5.

¹⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv(2), p. 33.

¹¹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 406.

¹² He witnessed the foundation charter of Poulton Abbey where he is called the first abbot of Combermere: above.

¹³ He witnessed a charter of Walter Durdant, Bp. of Cov., for the canons of Lilleshall usually dated c. 1155: *Eyton, Salop.* viii. 216–17; V.C.H. *Salop.* ii. 58n. Barraclough dates the charter 1149–50 (*Early Ches. Chats.* 3) but this early date has been challenged: *Letters and Papers of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, 153n.

¹⁴ Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 130.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 131; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i. 196; *Whalley Coucher Bk.* i. 15; ii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xi), 533.

¹⁶ *Eyton, Salop.* ix. 187; *Cur. Reg. R. i.* 299; ii. 9. He was

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THE ABBEY OF VALE ROYAL

John, occurs 1355.²⁹
 Richard Chester, occurs 1365.³⁰
 John, occurs 1379.³¹
 Robert Colwich, occurs between 1380 and 1387-8.³²
 Thomas Bernewell, or Lymnor, occurs between 1398 and 1411.³³
 William Plymouth, occurs from 1412, resigned or removed by 1418.³⁴
 Thomas Fynyon, occurs 1418.³⁵
 William Plymouth, occurs between 1420 and 1442.³⁶
 Roger, occurs 1444.³⁷
 Richard Alderwas, died 1446.³⁸
 Thomas Rigley, died between 1442 and 1453.³⁹
 Roger Plymouth, occurs between 1450 and 1462.⁴⁰
 John, occurs between 1464 and 1468.⁴¹
 Robert Christleton, occurs between 1469 and 1491.⁴²
 John, occurs between 1498 and 1516.⁴³
 Christopher Walley, occurs between 1518 and 1529.⁴⁴
 John Massey, occurs 1535, surrendered the abbey in 1538.⁴⁵

A common seal in use in 1482⁴⁶ is circular, 1½ in. in diameter, and depicts an abbot with a pastoral staff in his right hand and a book in his left hand; in the field on either side are three heads couped at the neck and a fleur-de-lis with a pierced mullet over that on the right. Legend, lombardic: SIG . . . CO . . . E S . . . MAR . . . DE COMBEREMERE.

The bronze matrix⁴⁷ of the seal of an early-15th-century abbot, a pointed oval 2 by 1¼ in., depicts the Virgin crowned with the Child on her left arm standing under a canopy with niches and pinnacles at the sides. In the base, under a pointed arch and between two sprigs of foliage is the half-figure of the abbot in prayer. Legend, black-letter with the words separated by sprigs: SIGILLUM THOME FYNION ABBATIS DE CUMBERMERE.

ACCORDING to its own historian, Vale Royal owed its foundation to a vow made during a storm at sea by the future Edward I when he was returning from the Holy Land. He promised to found a Cistercian monastery in England, and endow it richly enough to maintain 100 monks for ever. The vow is well authenticated and was probably made in the winter of 1263-4 during a stormy voyage from France, but the civil wars of the following two years delayed the implementation of Edward's plan to found the largest Cistercian house in England.⁴⁸ In 1266 the general chapter of the Cistercian order authorized the abbots of Buildwas (Salop.), Neath (Glam.), and Flaxley (Glos.) to inspect the site proposed for the new house which was to be a daughter house of Abbey Dore (Herefs.);⁴⁹ the monks of Dore had shown kindness to Edward during his captivity at Hereford in 1265.⁵⁰ The site chosen was at Darnhall in Delamere Forest and on 2 August 1270, on the eve of Edward's departure on crusade, a foundation charter was issued for the monastery of St. Mary, Darnhall: the monks were given the site of the house, Darnhall and Over manors, Langwith hay in Wheldrake (Yorks. E.R.), and the advowsons of Frodsham and Weaverham and of Ashbourne and Castleton (Derb.).⁵¹ It is likely that the original plan had already been modified as the endowment was hardly sufficient to support 100 monks and, according to a later tradition, the house was founded for a community numbering only 30.⁵² The process of foundation was slow: in January 1271 Henry III appealed to the abbey and convents of England for theological books for the abbey which his son had 'begun to found' at Darnhall and the colonizing monks from Dore did not arrive at Darnhall until February 1274.⁵³ They were not welcome: in October 1275 some of the tenants of Darnhall were trying to withdraw customs and services owed to the abbot and convent, the opening shot in a dispute which was to last for the next half century.⁵⁴ There were also complaints from the men of

²⁹ 36 D.K.R. 119.

³⁰ V.C.H. Lancs. ii. 136.

³¹ T.H.S.L.C. cxxiv. 22.

³² Wm. Salt Libr., Stafford, S.D. Cooke, 81; B.L. Harl. MS. 20-4, f. 135; 36 D.K.R. 120.

³³ Cal. Pat. 1396-9, 343; Cal. Papal Reg. v. 334; vi. 335; B.L. Cotton MS. Cleopatra D. vi, ff. 70v.-71; Harl. MS. 1967, f. 112; 36 D.K.R. 120.

³⁴ 36 D.K.R. 120; P.R.O., CHES 29/112, rot. 16d.

³⁵ P.R.O., CHES 29/122, rott. 15, 16.

³⁶ Ibid. CHES 29/147, rot. 17; CHES 25/12, rot. 32; 37 D.K.R. 160.

³⁷ Bk. of Abbot of Combermere, 17-18.

³⁸ 3 Sheaf, xxix, pp. 17-18.

³⁹ He had been a monk of Whalley: Whitaker, *Hist. Whalley*, i. 113.

⁴⁰ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/10, f. 45v.; Ches. R. O., DWN/1/21; Bk. of Abbot of Combermere, 22, 27-8.

⁴¹ Chester City R. O., CR 72/93; Bk. of Abbot of Combermere, 29-30.

⁴² P.R.O., CHES 25/6, rot. 13-13d.; Bk. of Abbot of Combermere, 23-4.

⁴³ Bk. of Abbot of Combermere, 31-3; 3 Sheaf, xxx, p. 17; B.L. Add. Ch. 43358.

⁴⁴ Bk. of Abbot of Combermere, 36, 40; L. & P. Hen. VIII, iv(3), p. 2700; T. Harwood, *Hist. & Antiquities of Church & City of Lichfield* (1806), 412 (admission to Lich. Guild, 1518, where he is described as *sacre theologie bacallarius*).

⁴⁵ *Lancs. and Ches. Cases in Star Chamber*, i. 76; above. He had been superior; his will was proved in 1556: 3 Sheaf, x, p. 15.

⁴⁶ B.L. Add. Ch. 43357; W. de G. Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 519; Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 322.

⁴⁷ Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 520; B.L. Seal xxxv. 89; A. B. Tonnochy, *Cat. of Brit. Seal-Dies in B.M.*, p. 176.

⁴⁸ Vale Royal Ledger Bk. (R.S.L.C. lxviii), pp. vii-viii, 2-3; *Ann. Mon.* (Rolls Ser.) iii. 227.

⁴⁹ Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, iii. 42-3.

⁵⁰ Vale Royal Ledger Bk. 4. ⁵¹ Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 709.

⁵² Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 150 n.

⁵³ Dugdale, *Mon.* v. 709; Cal. Pat. 1266-72, 505; Vale Royal Ledger Bk. 4.

⁵⁴ Vale Royal Ledger Bk. 43-4, 48-9; P.R.O., SC 8/309/15406.

Middlewich about the loss of revenue from two salt pits given to the abbey.⁵⁵ The house had initial financial difficulties and in 1274 the abbot was allowed £30 from the exchequer of Chester to clear part of its debts and maintain the monks.⁵⁶ In 1275 an annual grant of 50 marks was made to the abbot until land of that value could be assigned to him⁵⁷ and he received Weaverham manor which the king had regained from Roger Clifford.⁵⁸ That was followed in 1276 by the grant of Conewardsley or Conersley manor, in Whitegate, regained from Walter Vernon.⁵⁹ At the same time the abbey was allowed free warren in Darnhall and Weaverham, its lands were disafforested, and it was granted privileges in Delamere forest, including the right to keep bees and have a quarry.⁶⁰ In 1276 it granted Langwith hay to Warter Priory (Yorks. E.R.) and in 1278 sold the advowson of Ashbourne to the dean and chapter of Lincoln.⁶¹

Meanwhile the site had proved unsuitable for the new abbey and Edward permitted the monks to choose a more suitable one 'out of all the kingdom of England'.⁶² They settled on a place only 4 miles away in Darnhall manor, called 'Wetenhalewes' and 'Muneheneswro',⁶³ which the king renamed Vale Royal to show that no monastery should be more royal in liberties, wealth, and honour.⁶⁴ On 13 August 1277, at the height of his preparations to invade Wales, Edward laid the foundation stone of the great altar in honour of the Virgin and Sts. Nicholas and Nigasius. The queen placed stones for herself and her son Alfonso and other stones were laid by Edward's companions: the earls of Gloucester, Cornwall, Surrey, and Warwick, Maurice of Craon, Otto of Grandson, John de Greilly, Robert Tybetot and Robert de Vere.⁶⁵ Edward had given a portion of the Holy Cross to the abbey at its foundation and later he and his queen added gifts of relics, vestments, and books.⁶⁶ The years after 1277 were dominated by building operations and the problems of financing the king's ambitious plan: 'an object lesson in the unreliability of princes and the folly of monks who had allowed themselves to be drawn into grandiose building schemes inconsistent with the architectural simplicity which had once been one of the most cherished

principles of their order'.⁶⁷ Edward intended that the revenues of the county of Chester should pay for the building of the abbey and at the end of 1277 he ordered an initial payment of 1,000 marks to the abbot 'towards the construction of the church'.⁶⁸ In 1278 the financing of the project was put on a more regular footing with the appointment of a royal clerk, Leonius, son of Leonius, as chamberlain of Chester and custodian of the works at Vale Royal; Leonius was to use all the issues of the county for building the abbey.⁶⁹ In addition, certain casual revenues were added to the fabric fund over the next few years: the custody of the Wirral lands of Hugh de Ouram during the minority of his heirs;⁷⁰ revenues totalling £335 10s. 6d. a year during the minority of Richard FitzAlan of Oswestry;⁷¹ a fine of £100 on the county of Chester⁷² and a larger fine of 1,000 marks imposed on Richard of Hethersett, a sergeant of the Exchequer.⁷³ Money was freely available during the three years of Leonius' custodianship and he spent an average of £500 a year on building materials and the wages of workmen.⁷⁴ Timber was supplied from Delamere Forest and stone from the near-by quarries at Eddisbury. In 1283 the abbot was given custody of lead mines at Englefield (Denb.) and in 1284 was allowed ferns from Delamere forest to make glass.⁷⁵ Masons were assembled from all over England and the names of some, such as Dore, Furness, and Roche, indicate connexions with other Cistercian houses.⁷⁶ They were under the direction of Walter of Hereford, the master of the works and one of the most notable masons of the period; he was still in charge in 1290 and was presumably responsible for the design of the buildings put up at that period.⁷⁷ In 1278 the place 'on which the ground plan of the monastery was to be traced' was levelled and the foundations of the church were dug out.⁷⁸ Ten years after the laying of the foundation stones work had begun on the cloisters; in 1287 the abbot entered into a contract with Ralph of Chichester and John Doget for a supply of polished marble columns, capitals, and bases which were to be shipped to Chester or Frodsham, probably from the Isle of Purbeck.⁷⁹

The abbot and convent had moved from Darnhall to temporary buildings at Vale Royal in 1281⁸⁰ and the

⁵⁵ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* i, p. 303; *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 111-12.

⁵⁶ *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 140.

⁵⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 105.

⁵⁸ *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 220; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 197. The abbot and convent undertook to pay 6 marks a year to Chester abbey in compensation for lost tithes: *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 284.

⁵⁹ *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 292, 342; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 199.

⁶⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 193-4, 270; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 197.

⁶¹ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 198, 208; *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 497.

⁶² *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 8.

⁶³ For a discussion of the place names see *P.N. Ches.* iii, 179-80.

⁶⁴ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 4, 7-8; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 215. The new name is found from Nov. 1277 (*Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 246) although a grant was made to the abbot of Darnhall as late as Nov. 1278: *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 320. In 1294 Edw. I confirmed to the abbot and convent of Vale Royal all possessions held by their former style: *Cal. Pat.* 1292-1301, 62.

⁶⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 5; F. M. Powicke, *Hen. III and the Lord Edward* (1947), ii, 722.

⁶⁶ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 9.

⁶⁷ R. A. Brown and H. M. Colvin, *Hist. King's Works*, i, 248; D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, 'First Three Years of the Building of Vale Royal Abbey, 1278-80', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, xlv, 5-47; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 193-231.

⁶⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 247.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 252; *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 460.

⁷⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1271-81, 247.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 309, 311, 404, 416; 1281-92, 32, 66, 113, 169; *Cal. Close*, 1279-88, 171, 373.

⁷² *Cal. Close*, 1279-88, 89.

⁷³ *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 150. In 1298 the remainder was being paid in annual instalments of £20: *Cal. Close*, 1296-1302, 158.

⁷⁴ *Hist. King's Works*, i, 249; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 193-231.

⁷⁵ *Hist. King's Works*, i, 250; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 197, 203; *Cal. Close*, 1279-88, 264; *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 69; *Cal. Fine R.* 1272-1307, 198.

⁷⁶ *Hist. King's Works*, i, 249; *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, xlv, 29.

⁷⁷ *Hist. King's Works*, i, 249-50.

⁷⁸ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 226, 228.

⁷⁹ A. J. Taylor, 'Cloister of Vale Royal Abbey', *J.C.A.S.* N.S. xxxvii(2), 295-7. ⁸⁰ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 5.

move heralded a change in the arrangements for financing the building works. In June 1281 the abbot succeeded Leonius as chamberlain of Chester but he held the office for only a few months. In November the new justice, Reynold de Grey, undertook to farm the revenues of the county for 1,000 marks a year which he was instructed to pay to the abbot for the building works.⁸¹ The abbot became keeper of the works and by 1284 another royal clerk, William of Perton, who had been keeper of the works at the castles of Flint and Rhuddlan (Flints.), was associated with him in the post.⁸² Money was less readily available under the new arrangement as Grey was obliged to divert part of the farm to meet the costs of suppressing the Welsh revolt, and between 1281 and 1284 the abbot received less than half the amount to which he was entitled.⁸³ To meet the deficit it was arranged that he should be paid 890 marks from the royal wardrobe.⁸⁴ The building was far enough advanced for the site to be consecrated and the boundaries of the precinct marked out during a royal visit in 1283.⁸⁵ The visit was followed by another adjustment of the financing at the parliament of Acton Burnell: the total annual contribution from the king was increased to £1,000, of which 790 marks were to be paid from the revenues of the county of Chester and 710 marks from the wardrobe.⁸⁶ That arrangement remained in force until 1290 but did not work satisfactorily as arrears of £1,808 accumulated over the next seven years.⁸⁷ Some of the money may have been diverted by the abbot to other purposes; royal displeasure was certainly incurred for that or some other reason since in 1290 the master of the works, Walter of Hereford, was informed that 'the king has ceased to concern himself with the works of that church, and henceforth will have nothing more to do with them'. The barons of the Exchequer were ordered to ensure that a later grant towards the arrears was not used for any other purpose.⁸⁸ Thereafter Edward made only one meagre grant of £40, for the church roof in 1305, to help a project which he had begun so ambitiously and abandoned so suddenly.⁸⁹ Work seems to have stopped almost immediately as the abbot complained in 1301 that not a single workman had been employed for the previous ten years.⁹⁰ Increasingly desperate appeals were made for the payment of the outstanding arrears but even a legacy of 350 marks from Queen Eleanor which was partly intended for the foundation of a chantry for two monks and partly for the building works was not paid in full until 1312.⁹¹ In 1305 the abbot suggested that

the arrears of £549 which were still owing should be paid from the bailiwick of the Peak which was within reasonable distance of the abbey and, although the request was granted, £409 was still owing in 1312 when Edward II allowed the abbey £80 a year from the revenues of Ashford manor in the Peak; even that payment ceased in 1315 when the manor was granted to Edmund of Woodstock.⁹² Although the monks of Vale Royal believed that Edward I had paid £32,000 towards the building of their abbey, the total contribution of Edward and his son towards the grandiose and unfinished project was less than a third of that sum.⁹³

Although the first thirty years of the history of Vale Royal abbey were dominated by an over-ambitious building programme, the community had at the same time to face the usual problems in establishing itself. Additional endowments were needed to help with the costs of building and to support the monks but, as was perhaps understandable in view of the circumstances and late date of the abbey's foundation, few benefactors other than the royal family can be traced and even some apparent gifts of land and other property may have been purchases by the abbey.⁹⁴ Ralph Vernon gave land in Stanthorne and Richard Bostock added to that holding and also gave Parme in Mooresbarrow;⁹⁵ the abbey had acquired the lands of James le Vilour in Mooresbarrow by royal grant in 1284.⁹⁶ In 1281 the king bought land in Twemlow to give to the abbey, and its holding there was increased in 1288 by a gift from Thomas Twemlow.⁹⁷ Another example of an initial royal grant attracting a further gift occurred in London where the abbey acquired houses and rents in the suburbs.⁹⁸ In 1285 the king increased the abbey's holdings in its neighbourhood by the grant of several small parcels of land in Over, Bradford, and Sutton.⁹⁹ Five years previously he had made the more substantial gift of Gayton manor in Wirral but in 1312 that distant property was exchanged, with land in Lach Dennis, for Marton manor in Over.¹ Edward I added one further church to his initial endowment: in 1280, after deciding that the resources of the house were insufficient, he granted it the advowson of Kirkham in Amounderness (Lancs.) and papal agreement to its appropriation was obtained from Honorius IV through the good offices of Otto of Grandson.² If Edward's endowment of lands and churches did not meet his original intentions, he was, until 1290 at least, generous in his gifts in money and kind for the monks' maintenance. In 1276 the abbot and convent were granted an annual tun of wine for mass³ and in

⁸¹ *Cal. Fine R.* 1272-1307, 150; *Cal. Pat.* 1272-81, 664-5; *Cal. Chanc. R. Var.* 189.

⁸² *Cal. Close*, 1279-88, 264; *Hist. King's Works*, i. 251.

⁸³ *Hist. King's Works*, i. 251; *Cal. Close*, 1279-88, 216-17.

⁸⁴ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 64; *Hist. King's Works*, i. 251.

⁸⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 11-12; *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 74.

⁸⁶ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 64-5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 65; *Hist. King's Works*, i. 252.

⁸⁸ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxvii(2), 296; *Hist. King's Works*, i. 252; P.R.O., SC 8/279/13916.

⁸⁹ P.R.O., E 403/128 m. 2.

⁹⁰ *Hist. King's Works*, i. 253.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 252-3; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 52-3; *Cal. Pat.* 1307-13, 508; *Cal. Close*, 1307-13, 481.

⁹² *Hist. King's Works*, i. 253; P.R.O., SC 8/219/10914; SC 8/276/13784; SC 8/279/13916; *Cal. Close*, 1302-7, 247; 1307-13, 478; *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 319; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 44-5, 52.

⁹³ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 65; *Hist. King's Works*, 253 n.

⁹⁴ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* pp. vii, 130; 3 *Sheaf*, xxxiv, p. 3; *Cat. Anct. D.* i, A 206; ii, B 3474.

⁹⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 186; *Hist. MSS. Com.* 1, 2nd Rep. Antrobus, p. 69.

⁹⁶ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 272; *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 436.

⁹⁷ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 252; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* i, p. 436.

⁹⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1292-1301, 437; *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 319-20; *Cat. Anct. D.* i, A 1538.

⁹⁹ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 282.

¹ *Ibid.* 1257-1300, 225; 1300-26, 204; B.L. Harl. MS. 2074, f. 69v.; 3 *Sheaf*, xvii, p. 13; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 130.

² *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 10-11, 133; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 245; V.C.H. Lancs. vii. 145-7.

³ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257-1300, 198; *Cal. Close*, 1272-9, 297.

1278 the abbot was given 14 marks to buy clothing for himself and his monks.⁴ The annual grant of 50 marks for the maintenance of the community which was first made in 1275 was paid until 1289⁵ and when the farmer of Northwich joined the community in 1277 the farm of the town was given to the abbot and convent; it was still in their hands in 1301–2.⁶ The lands of the abbey in Delamere forest were disafforested and the abbot and convent were allowed free warren on their demesne lands and given extensive privileges in the forest;⁷ in addition, the abbot was given two bucks from Delamere forest in 1283 and in 1302 the abbot and convent were allowed to take firewood from Peak forest for five years.⁸

Little evidence has survived for the internal state of the abbey during its first half century. It is not known how many inmates were recruited locally to swell the initial colony from Dore though a few members of the official class of the county and the diocese became monks or lay brothers.⁹ In 1276 and 1278 the abbot was allowed to send agents to Ireland to buy corn for the house and in 1279 to import 100 tuns of wine and other goods.¹⁰ By 1275 the house had begun to produce wool for sale to alien merchants and, although the abbot was ordered by the general chapter in 1282 to settle debts due to merchants immediately, £172 was owed to merchants of Lucca in 1288.¹¹ The indebtedness increased as the money for the building works ran out and at that period the abbots acknowledged considerable debts to the archbishop of York, the dean of Wells, and the royal clerk, William Hamilton;¹² in 1311 £200 was still owed to William of Perton, the joint custodian of the works in 1284.¹³ The early abbots of Vale Royal, who were frequently absent on the business of the house at the royal court or at meetings of the general chapter,¹⁴ had formidable problems to contend with at home. They were probably obliged by financial difficulties to be over-exacting landlords and their disgruntled tenants found support in the neighbourhood from those who were jealous of the new abbey's privileges. The history of the first four abbots, probably written by Abbot Peter in the 1330s,¹⁵ contains several accounts of attacks on the abbey and its superiors. The first abbot, John Chaumpeneys, was said to have overthrown the enemies 'who would have attacked his house', while his successor, Walter of Hereford, prevented a group of armed men from forcing a passage through the

precinct and defended the rights of his house in the courts against the justice of Chester.¹⁶ The third abbot, John of Hoo, complained that the justice, Robert Holland, had prevented the abbey and its tenants from enjoying their forest privileges and had denied the abbot custody of prisoners taken for offences in the abbey's manors.¹⁷ Abbot Hoo, who seems to have been a stern disciplinarian capable of expelling errant monks from the convent, cited the ill will of the common people, as well as his infirmities when he successfully asked royal permission to resign his office.¹⁸ His successor, Richard of Evesham, who had a reputation for sanctity yet guided the house safely through the 1316–18 famine,¹⁹ also had to face local hostility: he was attacked while collecting tithes and in 1320 one of his monks was attacked at Tarvin and one of his servants was killed at Darnhall.²⁰

It was the fifth abbot of Vale Royal who had to deal with the most determined and persistent hostility from the abbey's tenants at Darnhall and Over. Abbot Peter, who held office between 1322 and 1339,²¹ was an energetic defender of the rights of his house and, by later repute, a man of great wisdom.²² In 1328 the abbey came under attack from several quarters. Its claim to Kirkham church was challenged by the archbishop of York and was defended by Walter Welsh, the cellarer and Abbot Peter's closest associate.²³ The abbot appeared in person at the Northampton parliament to claim rights of estover and pasture which were being withheld by forest officials; having obtained charters of confirmation he immediately returned to Vale Royal to deal with his rebellious tenants.²⁴ The tenants, aggrieved by exceptionally harsh exploitation, had carried their complaints against their new landlords, together with their plough-shares, directly to their former lord but were told by Edward, 'as villeins you have come and as villeins you shall return'.²⁵ On their return the abbot had seized their goods and thrown them out of their houses.²⁶ In 1307 an inquest before the justice of Chester confirmed their bondage.²⁷ The dispute reached a climax in 1328 when the bond tenants, whose claims to trial by jury and to the leasing of their land without licence were denied in the manor court, rose in arms and their ringleaders were imprisoned; they offered a fine of £10 which the abbot reduced to £4.²⁸ A succession of manumissions in 1330²⁹ did not cure discontent, which in 1336 erupted.³⁰ The villeins of Over, whom the abbot

⁴ *Cal. Close*, 1272–9, 320.

⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 230; *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 171, 308; 1288–96, 2, 106, 182.

⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1272–81, 246; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 2.

⁷ B. M. C. Husain, 'Delamere Forest in Late Mediaeval Times', *T.H.S.L.C.* cvii. 27, 36–8; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1257–1300, 272; *Cal. Pat.* 1272–81, 247; *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 319.

⁸ *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 209; *Cal. Pat.* 1301–7, 50.

⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1272–81, 246; 1281–92, 391; *Cal. Fine R.* 1272–1307, 182; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 64; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 16.

¹⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1272–81, 185, 265, 315; *Cal. Doc. Ireland*, ii, p. 275.

¹¹ *Cal. Close*, 1272–9, 254–5; 1288–98, 29; Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, iii. 227; W. Cunningham, *Growth of Eng. Industry and Commerce*, i. 634.

¹² *Cal. Close*, 1279–88, 306, 359, 423, 492; 1288–96, 393.

¹³ *Ibid.* 1307–13, 383.

¹⁴ *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 112; *Cal. Close*, 1313–18, 69; *Recs. of Wardrobe and Household* 1285–6, pp. 3, 11, 24, 43.

¹⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* p. vii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 14–15. His successor was released payment of £200 for a pardon which Abbot Walter obtained from Edw. I: *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 402.

¹⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 128–9.

¹⁸ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 18, 50–1.

²¹ See below, list of abbots.

²² *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 75.

²³ *Ibid.* 68–74.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 45–7. The charters were dated 3, 5 May 1328; the 'rising' at Darnhall took place on 6 May 1328, rather than 1329 as it is dated in the *Ledger Bk.*: *ibid.* 31–2.

²⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 121; *Essays in Econ. Hist.* ed. E. M. Carus-Wilson, ii. 84.

²⁶ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 121–2; P.R.O., CHES 29/20, rot. 5.

²⁸ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 31–2.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 28.

³⁰ The abbot was under royal protection between 1333 and 1336: *Cal. Pat.* 1330–4, 392; 1334–8, 56, 90.

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denied admission to burgages in the newly chartered borough,³¹ joined those of Darnhall in complaints to the justice of Chester. Some were imprisoned, others journeyed to Westminster and Windsor seeking the king's help, but on successive hearings judgement was given in Chester in favour of the abbot. The men of Darnhall attacked the abbot and cellarer as they were travelling through Rutland and killed the abbot's groom. They were captured and eventually submitted to the abbot but not before three of their leaders had tried to lay further bills of complaint in the county court.³² Probably in the course of a later attack on the houses, crops, and possessions of Vale Royal³³ in 1339 the abbot and cellarer were killed.³⁴

In the middle of those troubles Abbot Peter moved the convent from the 'unsightly and ruinous' buildings which they had occupied since 1281 into its new abbey; the move took place on 15 August 1330 in the presence of the abbot of Vale Royal's mother house of Dore.³⁵ It seems, however, that the conventual buildings, like the church, were not yet fully built. In 1336 Abbot Peter noted in a report on the revenues and expenses of the house that the vaults of the church were yet to be erected, 'together with the roof and the glass and the other ornaments'. In addition, 'the cloister, chapter-house, dormitory, refectory, and other monastic offices still remain to be built in proportion to the church'.³⁶ He pointed out that the revenues of the house were not sufficient to meet the cost of completing the buildings and asked for help from the general chapter. The revenues of the house were said to amount to £248 17s.: £101 6s. 8d. a year from the churches of Kirkham, Frodsham, Weaverham, and Castleton and the remainder from the manors of Darnhall and Weaverham, the granges which had been established at Conewardsley, Bradford, Knight's (or 'Bieurepeir'), Marton, Twemlow and Mooresbarrow, salt pans at Northwich, and rents in Chester and London.³⁷ Annual expenses were estimated at £200 and included £20 for the maintenance and repair of the granges, £60 for hospitality, £16 for the wages of abbey servants, £21 for the expenses of the abbot and other officers of the house, £30 in 'farms and fees to clerks and esquires for the defence of the monastery', and £50 in 'gifts, damages, and contributions'. The remaining £48 17s. hardly sufficed to maintain the abbot and 20 monks even 'according to the poor way of living in the district'. Although Abbot Robert de Cheyneston covered the choir and north part of the church with lead between 1340 and 1342 at a cost of £100,³⁸ the resources were too limited to

complete the great church.³⁹ In 1353, however, the Black Prince decided to continue and complete the work begun by his great-grandfather.⁴⁰ He granted a tenth of the fine of 5,000 marks offered by the county of Chester for the postponement of the eyre and promised another 500 marks when he visited Vale Royal in 1358. The first grant was to be paid over 4 and the second over 5 years.⁴¹ Commissions to impress masons and other workmen were authorized by the prince in 1354 and by the royal chancery in 1360.⁴² Emboldened by the revival of royal munificence the abbot and convent embellished their incomplete church with a *chevet* of thirteen chapels, alternately polygonal and four-sided, at the east end;⁴³ unique in England, it is thought to derive from Toledo cathedral. In 1359 they entered into a contract with the master mason, William of Helpeston: the abbot at his own expense was to build the twelve remaining chapels from the foundations to the string course and Helpeston was to complete the masonry work; he was to be paid £860 in instalments by the prince and to receive an annual pension of 40s. from the abbey for life.⁴⁴ The work was expected to take at least six years;⁴⁵ in 1362 the prince had to order the abbot and convent to carry out the terms of the contract, and Helpeston was still at work in 1368 when he was given authority to impress workmen.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, on 19 October 1360, a violent storm blew down the nave 'from the wall at the west end to the bell-tower before the gates of the choir'; although no weakness had been observed the piers fell 'like trees uprooted by the wind'.⁴⁷ The appropriation of the church of Llanbadarnfawr (Cardig.), the advowson of which had been given by the Black Prince in 1359, was immediately licensed to help towards the cost of the repair of the nave.⁴⁸ Already heavily in debt and burdened with the steadily increasing costs of hospitality,⁴⁹ the abbot and convent could not contemplate rebuilding the nave without further outside help which was not forthcoming. They eventually had to ask permission from Richard II to curtail the nave and he agreed that the church should be 'reduced in height and width according to the advice of our justices and chamberlains of Chester'.⁵⁰ The grants of timber from Delamere forest made in the 1390s were probably for this limited rebuilding.⁵¹ If it had been completed to the original plan the church would have been 421 ft. long, more than any other Cistercian church in Britain and only a few feet shorter than Vaucelles, the largest in Europe.⁵²

During the rest of the Middle Ages the house attracted little further royal interest, apart from occa-

³¹ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 31, 187-9.

³² *Ibid.* 37-42.

³³ *Cal. Pat.* 1338-40, 485; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 163.

³⁴ 36 D.K.R. 429, 487.

³⁵ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 5-6, 179-80.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 163; *Hist. King's Works*, i. 253.

³⁷ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 161-2. Cf. a rental of property c. 1334: *ibid.* 92-113.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 163; *Cal. Close*, 1343-6, 380.

³⁹ At some unrecorded date, possibly early in the 14th cent., 6 completed altars had been consecrated: *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 12.

⁴⁰ For a full account of the new works and their financing see *Hist. King's Works*, i. 253-6.

⁴¹ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 122, 308-10; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 216.

⁴² *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 144; *Cal. Pat.* 1358-61, 441.

⁴³ *Hist. King's Works*, i. 254-5; F. H. Thompson, 'Excavations at Vale Royal 1958', *Antiq. Jnl.* xlii. 186-7.

⁴⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 344-5, 361-3; L. F. Salzman, *Building in Eng. down to 1540*, 439-41. Helpeston was to construct a drawing office in the north transept: *Hist. King's Works*, i. 254.

⁴⁵ *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 255.

⁴⁶ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 445; 36 D.K.R. 230.

⁴⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1358-61, 547-9; *Hist. King's Works*, i. 256.

⁴⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1358-61, 296-7, 547-9; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 88.

⁴⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1358-61, 547-9; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 393.

⁵⁰ *Hist. King's Works*, i. 256-7.

⁵¹ 36 D.K.R. 483.

⁵² *Hist. King's Works*, i. 256; B. Pendleton, *Notes on the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary, Vale Royal, Ches.* (priv. print., 1912), 20.

sional nominations to corrodies⁵³ and periodic concern about its disturbed state, and the abbot and convent were obliged to defend their existing property and privileges with little hope of receiving new ones. The distant churches of Kirkham and Llanbadarnfawr occasionally caused problems. In 1357 the abbot and convent were allowed to present a member of the house to the vicarage of Kirkham but in 1362 they were accused of allowing a chantry service in the church to lapse and in 1378 of failing to carry out the terms of the ordination of the vicarage.⁵⁴ Their right to the newly acquired church of Llanbadarnfawr came under attack from the Crown in 1398 and from the abbot of Strata Florida (Cardig.) in 1435. Its distance from Vale Royal caused considerable inconvenience; in 1442 the abbot complained that he had been attacked by Welshmen and imprisoned when attending petty sessions in connexion with the church.⁵⁵ The forest privileges enjoyed by the house continued to cause contention between the abbot and convent and the officials of Delamere forest. In 1348 the abbot's claim of privileges before the forest justices was allowed, in 1357 the extent of the common rights of the abbot's tenants within the forest was settled by perambulation, and in 1443 the forest privileges of the house were confirmed once more.⁵⁶ The privileges were, however, liable to be abused and in 1351 the Black Prince requested the abbot not to exercise his right to take fuel from the forest, warned him and his fellow monks not to frighten his game while hunting, and ordered him to allow no outsiders to hunt in the forest. During the 15th century the abbot and monks were often accused of forest offences.⁵⁷

Another continuing theme in the history of Vale Royal was the involvement of the house in local disorder. There is no evidence of any further trouble from the abbey's servile tenants but there were frequent legal disputes and violent feuds with gentry tenants and neighbours and cases of unruly behaviour by members of the house. In 1375 fighting broke out between Abbot Stephen and members of the Bulkeley of Cheadle family.⁵⁸ In 1394 Abbot Stephen gave refuge to the murderer of a member of the Bostock family and in the following year the Bostocks attacked the abbot's mill at Darnhall.⁵⁹ Stephen, abbot c. 1373–c. 1400, seems to have been incapable of managing the finances of the house or of maintaining internal discipline. He was accused at various times of cutting down and selling large quantities of timber, of taking a bribe to allow a prisoner to escape, and of harbouring members of his household who had been accused of criminal offences.⁶⁰ An inquisition in 1395–6 found that he had sold or destroyed much of the abbey's property in Darnhall and elsewhere over the previous ten years and had generally impoverished

the house.⁶¹ A visitation by the abbots of Oxford, Croxden, and Dieulacres in 1395 was halted by a mob led by members of the Bostock family and two of the monks, one of whom was later accused of rape and the other of theft from the abbey.⁶² The early 15th century appears to have been free from such incidents, although the abbey was in the king's hands in 1408 and 1410,⁶³ but it was followed by another 30 years of similar disturbances. In 1424 one of the abbot's servants was accused of an armed attack on the prior and in 1429 the arrest was ordered of those who had attempted to interfere, 'by arms or threats', with a recent election to the abbacy.⁶⁴ A visitation was ordered in 1436 and as the visitors feared they would be obstructed in their duties the sheriff and escheator of Cheshire were ordered to protect them.⁶⁵ The visitation was prompted by the behaviour of Abbot Henry Arrowsmith or Warrington; he had been accused, but acquitted, of rape at Over in 1433 and of harbouring an outlaw at Marton in 1435.⁶⁶ In 1437 he was ferociously murdered at Bradfordwood in Over by a band of armed men from Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire led by George Weaver of Lea; the vicar of Over drove his sword several times through the abbot's throat to make sure that he was dead.⁶⁷ The abbey was taken into royal protection in 1439 when it was said to be 'so wasted by misrule that £1,000 would be required to repair its estate' and the management of all its possessions was given to Humphrey, earl of Stafford.⁶⁸ In spite of the royal protection, which seems to have continued for several years, the abbey was still at the mercy of acquisitive local gentlemen. In 1446 the justice and chamberlain of Chester were ordered to imprison those who had seized Onston mill and other possessions of the abbey and to see that 'their tenants within their lordship fellowship them with no gentlemen within that country which will cause such gentlemen to malign against the said abbot and convent to their destruction, as they have done aforetime'.⁶⁹ Two years later Hugh Venables of Kinderton was imprisoned in Chester castle for destroying one of the abbey's mills, driving away cattle, threatening to kill the abbot, and refusing to allow the dispute to be settled by arbitration.⁷⁰ There was further internal trouble in 1453 when five of the monks were said to have stolen goods, including a bow and arrows, from the abbot's chamber.⁷¹ In 1455 the abbot wrote from London to the abbot of Cîteaux to complain that he had been driven from his house by the conspiracies of laymen and some of the monks; he asked that the abbots of Fountains (Yorks. W.R.) and Dore be invited to visit the abbey and transfer the offending monks to other houses. In the following year the general chapter ordered the abbots of Warden (Beds.) and Coggeshall (Essex) to investigate the

⁵³ *Cal. Close*, 1377–81, 126; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, v, p. 398; 26 D.K.R. 27.

⁵⁴ *V.C.H. Lancs.* vii. 145; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* iii, p. 183; *Cal. Pat.* 1361–4, pp. 527–8.

⁵⁵ *Cal. Close*, 1396–9, 273–4, 412; 1429–35, 364; *Cal. Pat.* 1396–9, 355, 513; *Rot. Parl.* v. 43; *P.R.O.*, SC 8/145/7218.

⁵⁶ *T.H.S.L.C.* cvii. 36–7; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 283, 363; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 24–5, 138–42.

⁵⁷ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 8, 9, 13; *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/12, rot. 30; 25/15, rott. 32–32d.; 25/17, rot. 1; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* p. x.

⁵⁸ *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/4, rot. 32; 25/7, rot. 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* CHES 25/8, rott. 41, 51.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* CHES 25/4, rott. 33–33d.; 25/7, rot. 1; 25/8, rott. 17d., 41.

⁶¹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 150n.

⁶² *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/8, rott. 49d., 51d.

⁶³ *Ibid.* CHES 25/10, rot. 31; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 21, 148.

⁶⁴ *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/12, rot. 8d.; 37 D.K.R. 109.

⁶⁵ 37 D.K.R. 735.

⁶⁶ *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/12, rot. 29d.; 3 *Sheaf*, xx, p. 31.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; *P.R.O.*, CHES 25/12, rott. 34d.–35.

⁶⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1436–41, p. 389.

⁶⁹ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 169–70.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 171–5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. ix n.

'damnable and sinister régime' at Vale Royal.⁷²

There is little further evidence of disorder until the last few years of the house's existence and its condition may have improved during the latter years of the long abbacy of Thomas Kirkham who became bishop of Sodor and Man in 1458⁷³ and during the even longer, though interrupted, abbacy of William Stratford.⁷⁴ After a long interval work was resumed on the fabric of the abbey; in 1422 an aisle was apparently being added to the church. Between 1486 and 1534 regular grants of timber from Delamere forest were received for repairs.⁷⁵ The size of the community probably remained constant during the late Middle Ages: there were 18 monks, including the abbot, in 1379 and 1381 and the community was the same size in 1509; there were 15 monks, including the abbot, at the dissolution in 1538.⁷⁶ The revenues of the house were estimated for tax purposes during a visitation by the abbot of Dore in 1509 at £346 os. 4½d., of which £248 13s. 4d. came from spiritualities.⁷⁷ The total was probably an underestimate since in the 1535 valuation the total revenues were £540 6s. 2d.: £239 1s. 9d. from temporal possessions and £301 4s. 5d. from spiritualities.⁷⁸ In 1509 £253 3s. 2d. remained clear after payments for wages, fees, and pensions totalling £92 17s. 7d.; in 1535 £518 19s. 8d. remained clear after outgoings of £21 6s. 8d. which included fees for the steward, auditor, and bailiffs in Weaverham, Over, Frodsham, and Chester, a corrody of £3 6s. 8d., various rents, and a pension of £4 to the abbot of Chester.⁷⁹ The record of the visitation of 1509 includes a partial inventory of the goods of the house and lists the contents of the abbot's chamber, the hospice, the pantry, the kitchen, and the brewery. In the church were 30 copes, 2 silver crosses, 6 chalices, and the furnishings, including a gold collar and silver pastoral staff, for the image of the Virgin Mary. The house had many oxen and other cattle, and the granges of Darnhall, Knight's, Bradford, and Hefferston and the churches of Frodsham and Weaverham were in the monks' own hands.⁸⁰

There is renewed evidence of internal disorder and the involvement of the house in the power struggles and feuds of the county under the last two abbots.

Accusations were brought against Abbot John Butler, and probably in September 1529 Wolsey ordered an inquiry which was carried out by Dr. Lee, probably Rowland Lee, later bishop of Coventry and Lichfield,⁸¹ accompanied by the abbots of Combe (Warws.) and Whalley (Lancs.). Butler, who had 'made officers of religious men and also seculars', was deprived in or before November,⁸² but in December 1529 entered into a bond for £1,000 with William Brereton of Malpas agreeing to be ready at all times to resign his office to a nominee of Brereton in return for a pension of 100 marks but not to resign without Brereton's consent.⁸³ Whether through Brereton's influence or Wolsey's fall, Abbot Butler was soon back in office; in May 1530 'my lord of Vale Royal is in his possession again, with the king's favour and letters, and some of his brethren in the castle of Chester, not all at their pleasure, no thanks to Mr. Lee'.⁸⁴ On Abbot Butler's death in 1535 William Brereton tried to get his nominee among the monks elected⁸⁵ and Sir Piers Dutton also presented a candidate to Thomas Cromwell as the monk most likely to carry out Cromwell's intentions.⁸⁶ A free election was allowed, however, and John Hareware, abbot of Hulton, became the last abbot of Vale Royal.⁸⁷ He tried to placate Brereton, 'who had all the rule of the county of Chester', with the offer of a bribe of £100 and at the time of his execution Brereton was receiving an annuity of £20 from the abbot.⁸⁸ Abbot Hareware had also to contend with Thomas Cromwell, who was appointed steward of Vale Royal in 1536.⁸⁹ In March 1538 Cromwell requested a lease of Darnhall manor on the grounds that the abbot had sufficient land and tithes in hand to furnish the monastery with corn and pasture. The abbot protested that Cromwell had been misinformed; he offered Cromwell any other lands rent-free but agreed to comply with the original request, even at the expense of the 'maintenance of good service and poor hospitality' in the house.⁹⁰ Cromwell's request prompted the abbot to start leasing the property of the house wholesale in anticipation of its dissolution; some of the leases, including one of the two tuns of prise wine, were sealed the day before the surrender of the house and most stipulated that the lease would be void if the

⁷² *Letters from Eng. Abbots to Chapter at Cîteaux* (Camd. 4th ser. iv), p. 41; Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*, iv, 753-6.

⁷³ Below, list of abbots. He was allowed to hold the abbacy in commendam for life: *Cal. Papal Reg.* xi, 343-4, 359.

⁷⁴ He seems to have been displaced twice and even after his resignation in 1516 or 1517 may have returned temporarily to office in 1529: *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22; below, list of abbots.

⁷⁵ *Reg. Chichele* (Cant. and York Soc.), ii, 257; 37 *D.K.R.* 735; 39 *D.K.R.* 268.

⁷⁶ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv, 22; *Traditio*, ii, 195; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 191; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xiii(2), p. 118.

⁷⁷ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 192.

⁷⁸ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v, 208-9, wrongly giving the total from spiritualities as £301 4s. 6d. and the income from Kirkham as 100s. instead of £100.

⁷⁹ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 192; *Valor Eccl.* v, 209.

⁸⁰ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 191-2.

⁸¹ *D.N.B.*

⁸² *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, iv (3), p. 2700; *B.L. Stowe MS.* 141, f. 12.

⁸³ *P.R.O.*, E 326/B 10693. The bond was not that of Abbot Hareware as stated in *Letters and Papers of Wm. Brereton of Malpas* (R.S.L.C. cxvi), 8, 31, 103.

⁸⁴ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, iv (3), p. 2878.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* vii, p. 322 (date corrected *ibid.* viii, p. 417); *P.R.O.*, C 1/902/16. His candidate, Ralph Goldsmith, or Castleton, took priestly orders in 1523 (*Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/14ii) and, as 'previously monk of Vale Royal', was dispensed from religious orders in Mar. 1538: *Faculty Off. Regs.* ed. D. S. Chambers, 125.

⁸⁶ *Letters Relating to Suppression of Monasteries* (Camd. Soc. [1st ser.], xxvi), p. 52. Dutton's candidate, Ranulph Wilmslow, also took priestly orders in 1523: *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/14ii. Anne Boleyn also intervened on behalf of 'a friend of Robert Powre': *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, viii, p. 417.

⁸⁷ *P.R.O.*, C 1/902/16; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, vii, p. 423 (date corrected: *ibid.* viii, p. 417). Dr. Thos. Legh was later accused of taking an excessive fee at the election: *ibid.* ix, p. 211.

⁸⁸ *P.R.O.*, C 1/902/16; *Letters and Accounts of Wm. Brereton*, 255, 258, 263, 271, 278; E. W. Ives, 'Court and County Palatine in Reign of Hen. VIII', *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiii, 24; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, x, p. 365.

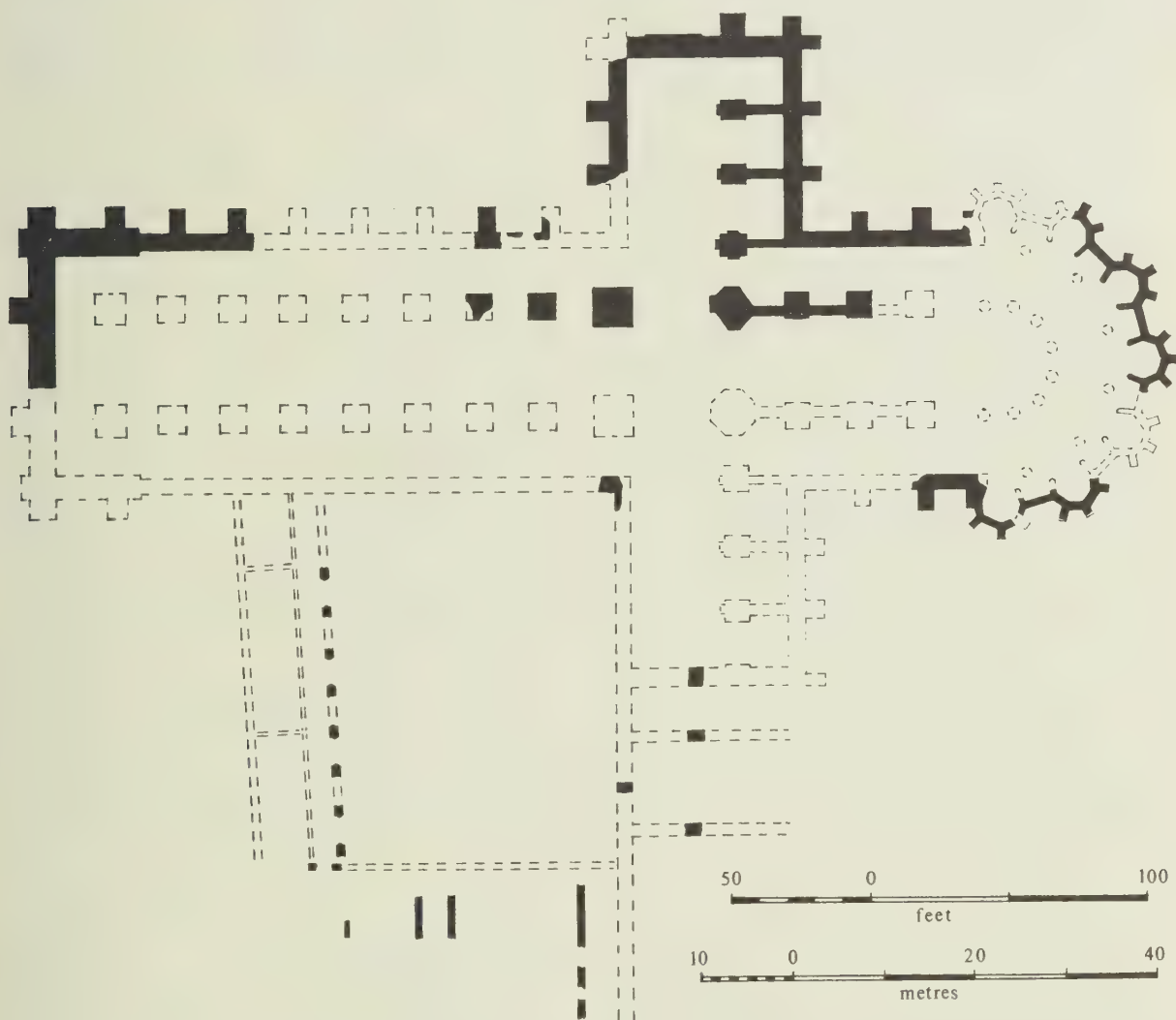
⁸⁹ His appointment was to take effect after the death of the earl of Shrewsbury but the fee of £20 was payable immediately: J. Youings, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 228 n.; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xiii (1), p. 52; xiv (2), pp. 318, 324.

⁹⁰ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xiii(1), pp. 208-9. Another version is entered under 1537: *ibid.* xiii(1), p. 306. For a full transcript see Dugdale, *Mon.* v, 701-2.

abbey were not dissolved.⁹¹ On 7 September 1538 the abbot, the prior, and thirteen monks surrendered the house to Thomas Holcroft the royal commissioner.⁹² Soon afterwards the abbot questioned Holcroft's commission and denied that he and his fellow monks had agreed to the surrender.⁹³ Holcroft alleged that after he and the abbot had agreed on the surrender, the abbot asked that he alone should be allowed to stay in the abbey, demanded, and was given, all the remaining plate, and asked for the organs in the church, money to

at £80, the goods of the house were worth no more than £10 and the debts could not be met from two years' revenues.⁹⁵ The abbot's efforts to repudiate the surrender were fruitless and in December 1538 he and his fellow monks obtained dispensation for a change of habit.⁹⁶ In the following year an attempt was made to discredit him, but he continued to draw his pension of £60 until 1546.⁹⁷

The property of the abbey⁹⁸ consisted of the manors of Darnhall, Over, and Weaverham, the granges of



THE ABBEY OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, ST. NICHOLAS, AND ST. NICASIOUS, VALE ROYAL

satisfy the house's creditors, and sureties for the payment of his debts and pension. Holcroft also claimed that the abbot had asked him to ante-date one lease and seal another of Frodsham rectory to Dr. Lee⁹⁴ in settlement of a debt of £80. He pointed out that the abbot had leased most of the demesnes, depleted the stock, and felled over 5,000 oaks. Apart from the plate, 20 fother of lead, and the bells, valued

Conewardsley, Bradford, Hefferston, Marton, Earnslow, and Knight's, Onston mill, lands and rents in Twemlow, Middlewich, Northwich, Allostock, Withington, Swettenham, Lymm, Nether Peover, Stanthorne, Capesthorpe, Mooresbarrow cum Parme, Dutton, Acton, Bartington, Chester, and London, the appropriated churches of Llanbadarnfawr, Kirkham, Castleton, Frodsham, Weaverham, and Whitegate at

⁹¹ P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/407.

⁹² 8 D.K.R. 46.

⁹³ *Letters Relating to Suppression of Monasteries*, p. 244. The abbot's signature on the doc. there printed is said to differ from that on the surrender: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (2), p. 244.

⁹⁴ Presumably Bp. Rowland Lee, whose commissary was

said to have been a witness of the transaction.

⁹⁵ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (2), p. 123.

⁹⁶ *Faulty Off. Regs.* ed. D. S. Chambers, 162.

⁹⁷ *Ormerod, Hist. Ches.* ii. 152; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), p. 248; xiv (2), p. 599; xxi (1), p. 309.

⁹⁸ P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/7384 mm. 76–80. For Whitegate church see *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 187; 3 *Sheaf*, xxiv, p. 27.

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the outer gate of the abbey. After the dissolution the tenants of Over and Weaverham, whose predecessors had struggled with the abbey, claimed that certain boon services which the officials of the Court of Augmentations were attempting to commute to money rents had been paid to the last two abbots in return for haybote, housebote, timber, and the 'comfort of hospitality' from the abbey.⁹⁹ The site of the abbey and most of the property in its vicinity were leased and in 1544 sold to Thomas Holcroft¹ who 'plucked down' the great church.² The house which he built on the site of part of the monastic buildings, although much altered since his day, still stood in 1979. The plan of the church that was laid out in 1278 was established by excavations in 1911, 1912, and 1958.³ It had a cruciform plan with a central tower and probably two smaller towers above the western ends of the aisles. Excluding those towers the nave had eight bays, the transepts three, each having an eastern chapel, and the chancel four as well as a semi-circular ambulatory. The cloister, on the south side of the nave, was about 140 feet square and was presumably intended to form part of a conventional, if large, Cistercian conventual layout although the extent to which this was built remains uncertain. Despite the delays over the completion of the domestic buildings work began in 1359 on the remodelling of the east end of the chancel to form a *chevet* and this appears to have continued after the disastrous storm of 1360 which blew down much of the still unfinished nave and may have severely damaged the range on the west of the cloister. That range, as now existing, appears to have been built in the early 16th century and to have been resited some distance east of its original position, probably to take account of the reduced length of the nave after 1360. The new east range incorporated the cloister alley within its ground floor and had larger rooms, presumably for the lay brothers, above. The south cloister range was also rebuilt in the early 16th century, although some older walling may remain, and is largely timber-framed above the ground floor. The central portion, which is distinguished by a more elaborate roof, was presumably the monks' refectory.⁴

ABBOTS

- Walter, first abbot of Darnhall.⁵
- Henry, apparently between 1270 and 1275.⁶
- John Chaumpeneys, first abbot of Vale Royal, occurs between 1275 and 1289.⁷
- Walter of Hereford or Dore, occurs between 1294 and 1307.⁸
- John of Hoo, occurs between 1308–9 and 1314–15.⁹
- Robert of Evesham or Eynsham, occurs 1316, 1320.¹⁰
- Peter, occurs from 1322, died 1339.¹¹
- Robert de Cheyneston, occurs between 1340 and 1349.¹²
- Thomas, occurs from 1351, died 1369.¹³
- Stephen, occurs between 1373 and 1400.¹⁴
- John, occurs 1405.¹⁵
- Thomas Oxenford, occurs 1414, 1418.¹⁶
- Henry Arrowsmith or Warrington, occurs from 1428, died 1437.¹⁷
- Thomas Kirkham, occurs from 1438–9, died 1475.¹⁸
- William Stratford, D.Th., occurs between 1476 and 1494.¹⁹
- Thomas, occurs 1495 and 1496.²⁰
- William Stratford, occurs between 1498 and 1504.²¹
- Richard, occurs 1505.²²
- William Stratford, occurs from 1509, resigned by 1517.²³
- John Butler or Buckley, occurs from 1517, removed 1529.²⁴
- William, occurs 1529.²⁵
- John Butler or Buckley, restored 1530, died 1535.²⁶
- John Hareware or Harwood, elected 1535, surrendered the abbey in 1538.²⁷

A seal in use at the dissolution²⁸ is a pointed oval 2 by 1½ in. and depicts an abbot standing on a carved corbel with a pastoral staff in his right hand and a book in his left hand; there is a crown in the field on each side. Legend, lombardic: *SIGILLUM ABBATIS ET CONVENTUS MONASTERII DE VALLE*

⁹⁹ Youings, *Dissolution of Monasteries*, 228.

¹ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, xv, p. 250; xix (1), p. 169.

² *Ibid.* xiii (2), 123.

³ Pendleton, *Notes on the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary, Vale Royal*, 15, 19–22; *Antiq. Jnl.* xlii. 183–99.

⁴ For an early assessment see G. D. Holland, 'Preliminary Notes on Hist. and Development of the Building', *Vale Royal Abbey and House* (Winsford Local Hist. Soc. 1977), 27–32.

⁵ Named in 1307 as recipient of the manor of Over: P.R.O., CHES 29/20, rot. 5; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 20.

⁶ B.L. Harl. MS. 2072, f. 50.

⁷ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 20; *Cal. Close*, 1272–9, 254; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 141.

⁸ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 20, 121; B.L. Harl. MSS. 2060, f. 109v.; 2072, f. 50; 2074, f. 69v.

⁹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 17; 36 D.K.R. 482; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 20, 91. He seems to occur in 1305 (B.L. Harl. MS. 2064, f. 44) but this may be a mistake in transcription.

¹⁰ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 20, 84; 36 D.K.R. 482.

¹¹ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 20–1, 37, 74–5. He was still alive in Aug. 1339: B.L. Harl. MS. 2072, f. 77.

¹² *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 21, 29, 159–60, 163.

¹³ *Ibid.* 21, 60, 163; *Earwaker, E. Ches.* i. 172.

¹⁴ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 21, 62; *Cal. Pat.* 1413–16, 201.

¹⁵ P.R.O., CHES 25/8, rot. 41.

¹⁶ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 21; P.R.O., CHES 29/118, rot. 10d.; *Cat. Ant. D.* iv, C 4787.

¹⁷ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 21, 155–6; 3 *Sheaf*, xx, p. 31; P.R.O., CHES 25/12, rot. 34d.

¹⁸ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22, 157. He was bp. of Sodor and Man from 1458: *Cal. Papal Reg.* xi. 343–4.

¹⁹ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22; P.R.O., CHES 25/15, rot. 32d.; *Harwood, Hist. and Antiquities of Lichfield* (1806), 407 (admission to Lich. Guild, 1484); *Emden, Biog. Reg. Oxford*, iii. 1801; P.R.O., CHES 25/17, rot. 1d.

²⁰ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22; P.R.O., CHES 25/17, rot. 1.

²¹ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22; 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 276; *Cal. Close*, 1500–9, 246.

²² *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22; 37 D.K.R. 735.

²³ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 22, 192.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 22–3; see above.

²⁵ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, iv (3), p. 2700. Possibly Wm. Stratford: see above.

²⁶ *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 23; *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, iv (3), p. 2878; vii, p. 322 (date corrected: *ibid.* viii, p. 322).

²⁷ *L. & P. Hen.* VIII, vii, p. 423. He was abbot of Hulton: *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 237 (giving incorrect date of election).

²⁸ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 171; *Birch, Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 785 (where it is said to be 12th-cent. in date).

REGALI. Another seal, said to be 13th-century in date,²⁹ is circular, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter, and depicts the Virgin, crowned and seated on a throne between tabernacle work, holding the Child on her left knee; in the field are eight small fleurs-de-lis in orle and the inner border is carved with small quatrefoils. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM CONVENTUS ECCLESIE VALLIS REGIS. An abbot's counterseal,³⁰ a pointed oval 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 1 in., depicts a right hand and vested arm issuing from the right hand side of the field and holding a staff enfiled with a crown; there is a wavy sprig in the field on the left hand side. Legend, lombardic: CONTRA SIGILL[UM] ABBATIS . . . [VA]LLE REGALI. An abbot's seal in use in 1509³¹ is

a pointed oval 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ by 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and depicts the Virgin, crowned and seated in the centre of three canopied niches, with the Child on her right knee and a sceptre in her left hand; on the left is a standing figure holding a staff in his left hand and a book in his right hand; the figure on the right is missing. In the base under a carved arch is the head of an abbot, with the body broken away, between two shields of arms: on the left those of England; the other is missing. Legend, black letter: . . . TIS DE VALLE REGALI. Another abbot's seal in use in 1529³² is a pointed oval about 1 by $\frac{7}{8}$ in. and depicts the Virgin with the Child on her left arm and the abbot kneeling before her to the right. Legend said to be: MATER DEI MEMENTO MEI.

HOUSE OF AUGUSTINIAN CANONS

THE ABBEY OF NORTON

THE priory of St. Mary at Norton, which was elevated to the status of an abbey at the end of the 14th century,³³ was not originally established at Norton but at neighbouring Runcorn. William FitzNeal, constable of Chester and baron of Halton, established a community of Augustinian canons within sight of his castle of Halton about 1115; he said in his foundation charter that he was acting at the suggestion of Robert de Limesey, bishop of Chester, and with the consent of Richard, earl of Chester.³⁴ The canons for the new foundation may have come from Bridlington priory (Yorks. E.R.) which had been founded by a cousin of William FitzNeal and of which William himself was a benefactor.³⁵ The church of the new priory at Runcorn was to be dedicated to St. Mary and St. Bertelin and this unusual double dedication suggests that there was already a church or chapel dedicated to the popular local saint on which the new community was to be based.³⁶ The canons did not, however, remain at Runcorn long enough to put up any new buildings and in 1134 the community was moved to Norton by William, the founder's son. The move may have been prompted by strategic considerations on the part of the patron but, since it was said to have been at the request and on the advice of Bishop Roger de Clinton, it was more likely to have been because the canons wanted a larger and healthier site.³⁷ The new priory church at Norton was not completed by the death of William the Constable and his successor, Eustace FitzJohn, gave pasture for 100 sheep to Hugh of Keckwick on

condition that he finished the church in every part according to the first foundation of William FitzNeal.³⁸ The church was dedicated to St. Mary alone although there seems to have been a later association with St. Christopher, an appropriate dedication in view of the proximity of the site to the Mersey.³⁹

William FitzNeal endowed his foundation at Runcorn generously. In addition to the church at Runcorn he gave it six churches: Great Budworth, Pirton (Oxon.), Burton on Stather (Lincs.), Castle Donington (Leics.), and Kneesall and Ratcliff upon Soar (Notts.). He granted it tithes from the mills at Castle Donington, Ratcliff upon Soar, Kneesall, and Ollerton and part of the tithes from his manors of Barrow, Guilden Sutton, Stanney, Raby, and Staining (Lancs.). The income from the tithes formed over half the total revenues of the house in 1535.⁴⁰ FitzNeal also gave the canons 800 a. of land in Clifton (nr. Runcorn), Halton, Thelwall, Widnes (Lancs.), Staining (Lancs.), and Castle Donington (Leics.); the mills at Halton and Barrow and a quarter of the mill at Ratcliff upon Soar; half his fisheries at Halton and Thelwall; rights of common at Halton and at Appleton and Cuerdley in his lordship of Widnes; a house in Halton and another in Chester.⁴¹ When the priory was moved the canons were given the manor of Norton in exchange for seven ploughlands in Staining, Runcorn, and Clifton but William the Constable added nothing to his father's original endowment.⁴² Two of William FitzNeal's tenants made grants to the house at the same time as their lord: Thurstan gave two-thirds of the demesne tithes of his manor of Sutton (in Prescott, Lancs.) and Hugh,

²⁹ Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 785.

³⁰ Ibid.; cf. sketch in J.C.A.S. [1st ser.] i, facing p. 161.

³¹ Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 786; *Vale Royal Ledger Bk.* 192.

³² P.R.O., E 326/B 10693; cf. Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 786.

³³ Below.

³⁴ J. Tait, 'The Foundation Charter of Runcorn (later Norton) Priory', *Chetham Miscellanies* (Chetham Soc. N.S. c), 3.

³⁵ Ibid. 10.

³⁶ Ibid. 9; G. Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 24-5.

³⁷ Tait, 'Foundation Charter of Runcorn Priory', 3, 14.

³⁸ Ibid. 16; T. Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, ed. J. Nasmith, Cheshire XV. Hugh de 'Cathewik' is more likely to be Hugh

of Keckwick or Hugh of Dutton than a Yorks. tenant of Eustace FitzJohn as Tait suggests.

³⁹ In the late 14th century there was a large statue of St. Christopher carrying Christ at Norton; the statue is now in Liverpool museum: F. H. Thompson, 'Norton Priory, nr. Runcorn, Ches.', *Arch. Jnl.* cxxiii. 67; C. Nickson, *History of Runcorn* (1887), 25.

⁴⁰ Tait, 'Foundation Charter of Runcorn Priory', 11-12; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 209-10.

⁴¹ Tait, 'Foundation Charter of Runcorn Priory', 12-13.

⁴² Ibid. 15; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1327-41, 123-4. The foundation by John the Constable of Stanlow abbey in the 1170s led to some disputes between Norton and Stanlow over land and tithes: *Whalley Coucher Bk.* ii. 394-6, 410, 533, 547.

son of Odard gave land between Runcorn and Weston and, with his brother Gilbert, a mill at Walton between Keckwick and Warrington.⁴³ Hugh and Gilbert were ancestors of the Dutton family which became closely associated with the priory; Hugh's grandson, Hugh of Dutton, made further grants to the canons at the end of the 12th century and another grandson, Adam of Dutton, gave them his salt house in Northwich and reached an agreement with them over lands which they had acquired at Stockham next to his manor of Sutton Weaver.⁴⁴ The canons acquired some further grants of lands and rents from other tenants of the barons of Halton, such as Wrono Punterling who gave them his mill at Millington.⁴⁵ The Aston family probably gave them lands and rents in Aston by Sutton which they held at the dissolution.⁴⁶ They seem, however, to have received fewer benefactions from lesser landowners than was usually the case with Augustinian houses, possibly because the original endowment was generous.⁴⁷

The building of the church and conventual buildings occupied the early years at Norton. The canons, who lived in temporary huts,⁴⁸ were freed from tolls and the burdens of hospitality by Ranulph II, earl of Chester.⁴⁹ The size of the community apparently increased c. 1200: archaeological evidence suggests that the church and the cloisters were then enlarged and the first canons in Robert of Lathom's foundation at Burscough (Lancs.) probably came from Norton.⁵⁰ Little is known about the state of the community in the 13th century, apart from some legal proceedings concerning its churches,⁵¹ but there are some indications that it was healthy.⁵² In 1236 a fire destroyed the church and cloister but both were rebuilt more elaborately.⁵³ The church was becoming a popular burial place⁵⁴ and William de Warenne, sixth earl of Surrey, gave the canons a rent of 30s. a year from lands in Sowerby (Yorks.) to maintain a pittance for the soul of his niece, Alice, who was buried at Norton.⁵⁵ The possession of a miracle-working cross⁵⁶ must have increased the popularity of the house and some further building works were undertaken in the years around 1300: the chapter house was extended, the dormitory

range enlarged, a new chapel for burials built between the chapter house and presbytery, and a mosaic floor laid in the church.⁵⁷ There is no evidence that the building works were financed by substantial new endowments although the patronage of the Dutton family was continued by a grant of land in Newton (in Preston) by Peter of Dutton in 1290.⁵⁸

There are signs from the early 14th century that the house was short of money, possibly as a result of the ambitious building operations. In 1310 reports that the prior had been wasting the goods of the house caused Bishop Walter Langton to appoint two canons as co-adjutors with the prior in its governance and in the following year a visitation was ordered.⁵⁹ The bishop showed his continuing interest in Norton's affairs by invalidating the election of 1329, although he confirmed the choice of the canons.⁶⁰ In the 1320s the rent from Sowerby proved difficult to collect.⁶¹ In 1331 the house, which was damaged by flooding, was licensed by the king to acquire lands worth £10 a year and also secured the appropriation of its church of Castle Donington.⁶² The priors then became involved in several legal disputes in their attempts to protect their rights of patronage and secure the payment of arrears of revenues; on one occasion the help of the Black Prince was sought in a dispute with Thomas Dutton.⁶³ There is little other evidence to support the later tradition that the Black Prince was a great benefactor of the house, apart from his purchase of its wool, and in 1354 the prior complained that the spiritualities of the house had been assessed for the fine of 5,000 marks granted to the prince.⁶⁴ The financial problems of the house evidently reached a crisis in the mid 14th century. In 1357 Bishop Northburgh admonished the prior for entering into rash and illegal contracts⁶⁵ which were beggaring his house, threatened to remove him from office, and enjoined on him certain measures to relieve the house of debt.⁶⁶ In response the prior and canons petitioned the bishop for permission to sell the advowson of the church of Ratcliff upon Soar to a *magnus reverendus*.⁶⁷ In 1358 the advowson was granted to John Winwick, treasurer of York Minster, and the house quitclaimed a pension

⁴³ Tait, 'Foundation Charter of Runcorn Priory', 13.

⁴⁴ *Cal. Chart. R.* 1327-41, 125; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 20-2, 24-5.

⁴⁵ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 16; *Cal. Chart. R.* 1327-41, 123-4; V.C.H. *Lancs.* iii. 177, 281, 322, 403.

⁴⁶ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 22, 33-4; 3 *Sheaf*, xvii, pp. 62-3; B.L. Harl. MS. 2037, f. 182v.; 2038, f. 38v.

⁴⁷ J. C. Dickinson, *Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into Eng.* 138-42; cf. V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 61, 275.

⁴⁸ J. P. Greene, 'Norton Priory', *Ches. Arch. Bull.* iv. 32-3.

⁴⁹ G. Barraclough, 'Some Charters of Earls of Chester', *Medieval Miscellany for Doris Mary Stenton* (P.R.S. N.S. xxxvi), 29. This privilege and others concerned with freedom from suit of court were claimed by the canons in 1350-1 and 1499: 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, pp. 81-2; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 682; *Cat. Anct. D.* i, A. 203.

⁵⁰ *Lancs. Inquests, Extents and Feudal Aids*, i (R.S.L.C. xlvi), 17n.; V.C.H. *Lancs.* ii. 148; J. P. Greene, *Norton Priory Excavation*, 1972 (Runcorn Development Corp.), 2-4.

⁵¹ *Cal. Letters Innocent III concerning Eng. and Wales*, ed. C. R. and M. G. Cheney, p. 111; W. H. Massie, 'On Timber Churches', J.C.A.S. [1st ser.], i. 306.

⁵² In 1206 Innocent III wrote a reassuring letter to a member of the house worried about the efficacy of prayers offered for him by his new name in religion: *Selected Letters*

of Pope Innocent III, ed. C. R. Cheney and W. H. Semple, 83.

⁵³ M. V. Taylor, '16th-Cent. Abbots of St. Werburgh's, Chester, etc.', J.C.A.S. N.S. xix (2), 184; Greene, *Norton Priory Excavation*, 1972, 1-2, 4; 1973, 1.

⁵⁴ Greene, *Norton Priory Excavation*, 1972, 2, 6.

⁵⁵ *Early Yorks. Charts.* viii (Yorks. Rec. Soc. Extra Ser. vi), 233-4; *Close R.* 1237-42, 232.

⁵⁶ J.C.A.S. N.S. xix (2), 187.

⁵⁷ 'Norton Priory', *Medieval Arch.* xvi. 172-3; xvii. 153; Greene, *Norton Priory Excavation*, 1972, 2-3; 1973, 1.

⁵⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1281-92, 336. For connexions with Dutton fam. in 13th cent. see Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 569, 683.

⁵⁹ *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/1, ff. 58v., 59.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* f. 60v.; B/A/1/2, f. 104.

⁶¹ *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 545; *Cal. Close*, 1323-7, 245; P.R.O., SC 8/130/3170.

⁶² *Cal. Pat.* 1330-4, 88-9; *Cal. Papal Reg.* ii. 379.

⁶³ *Cal. Close*, 1333-7, 44, 592; *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/3, f. 113; 3 *Sheaf*, xx, p. 45; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 139.

⁶⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 65, 81; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i, facing p. 682 (the rest of the information in the caption is inaccurate or not confirmed from other sources).

⁶⁵ Cf. *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 235; *Cat. Anct. D.* iv, A. 9847.

⁶⁶ *Lich. Jt. R. O.*, B/A/1/3, ff. 135v., 143v.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* f. 144v. There had been disputes over the advowson in 1320 and 1331: *Cal. Close*, 1318-23, 228; 1330-3, 355.

of 13s. 4d. from the church in return for a yearly rent of 40s. from Winwick's manor of Little Burgh in Lonsdale.⁶⁸

The first evidence of the size of the community is found in 1379 and 1381 when there were 15 canons including the prior; in 1401 the community numbered 16 and included a prior, subprior, infirmarer, cellarer, almoner, sacristan, and steward.⁶⁹ The house was over twice the size of the larger Augustinian houses in Staffordshire, including Rocester which ranked as an abbey and had only six canons in 1377.⁷⁰ Possibly the size of the community encouraged the prior and convent, with the support of their patron, John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, holder of Halton honor,⁷¹ to petition Pope Boniface IX for the grant of abbatial status. In May 1391 when Norton became the fifteenth Augustinian abbey in England the pope permitted the first abbot and his successors to use the mitre, ring, pastoral staff, and other pontifical insignia; in 1395 the new abbot presided over the Chapter of Augustinian canons held at Northampton.⁷² In an attempt to increase the revenues of the new abbey a further papal indult was obtained in 1399 to replace the vicars of the churches of Runcorn, Great Budworth, Pirton, Burton on Stather, and Castle Donington, on death or resignation, by canons from Norton.⁷³ Probably at that period the church was again enlarged by adding a north aisle to the nave and a Lady chapel to the east end and by building further chapels off the north and south transepts.⁷⁴ The church and buildings were, however, said to be ruinous in 1429 and the revenues of the house, which had been diminished by the frequent flooding of the Mersey, hardly sufficed to meet the costs of hospitality; a papal indulgence was offered for the next ten years to those who visited Norton and contributed to the cost of repairs.⁷⁵ Little more is known of the abbey's finances in the 15th century but a lawsuit over Aston chapel in 1453 and the sale of the advowson of the church of Grappenhall in 1458 and that of Kneesall in the following year indicates a crisis in the finances of the house.⁷⁶

No visitation records survive for Norton before the early 16th century but there are some indications of the nature of life there in the later Middle Ages. The names of the canons which occur in ordination registers suggest that most came from places near-by,⁷⁷ although there is some evidence of movement between houses: in 1356 a canon who had transferred to Norton from Leicester Abbey was walled up as an

anchorite in the churchyard of St. John's, Chester, and in 1423 Adam Olton, formerly a canon of Norton, became master of the hospital of St. Anthony of Vienne in London.⁷⁸ The vigorous rule of Richert Wyche, the last prior and first abbot, occasionally brought him into conflict with the law: in 1369 six of his servants seized a woman at Moore and she was imprisoned in the priory until she paid to regain her liberty; in 1384 the prior was accused of harbouring one of his canons who was said to have stolen cattle from the priory and in 1388 the prior himself was accused of obstructing boats in the Mersey by his fishyards called Gracedieu and Charity.⁷⁹ There are, however, only isolated cases of disorder during the 15th century. In 1430 a canon was accused of rape, abduction, and theft.⁸⁰ After the death of Abbot John Sutton in 1441 the election was disputed and the victors were later accused of poisoning Sutton but all three were acquitted of these and other serious charges brought against them.⁸¹ The community was smaller by the early 16th century: there were 9 canons in 1496, 7 in 1518, 8 in 1521 and 7 in 1524.⁸² The offices of prior, sacrist, precentor, kitchener, almoner, infirmarian, refectorer, and abbot's chaplain were shared among the canons and in 1518 and 1521 all members of the house held offices.⁸³ The decline in numbers caused concern at visitations: in 1518 the abbot said that he had searched in vain for suitable recruits but he was still enjoined in 1524 to make the numbers up to the full complement of twelve.⁸⁴ The buildings were then falling into disrepair. A visitation in 1524 had to be held in the abbot's oratory as the chapter house was dilapidated and repairs were ordered, but only within the resources of the house.⁸⁵ In 1518 the abbot reported to the visitor that the house was free from debt,⁸⁶ the common seal safeguarded, the canons well-disciplined, and the essentials of religion properly observed; the members of the convent were unanimous in their praise for the abbot's administration and agreed that all was well with the house, apart from *paucula*, which referred to the lack of an inventory and accounts, though the visitor was also concerned about alehouses.⁸⁷ At the next visitation in 1521 all again appeared well: the injunctions issued after the previous visitation were said to have been carried out and the abbot, far from being in debt, was owed £100; there was only one minor complaint from the infirmarian that he had no service books for the use of the sick and travellers.⁸⁸ The impression of

⁶⁸ *Burscough Cart.* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. xviii), pp. 164–5; *Cal. Close*, 1354–60, 533. The 40s. rent had been lost by the dissolution.

⁶⁹ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiv. 22; *Traditio*, ii. 200; Lambeth Pal. Libr., Reg. Arundel, i, ff. 484v–485.

⁷⁰ *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 245, 250, 259, 263.

⁷¹ R. Somerville, *History of Duchy of Lancaster*, i. 22.

⁷² *Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 405, 408, 411; *Chapters of Augustinian Canons* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. lxxiv), 77. On abbatial rank see Dickinson, *Origins of Austin Canons*, 156–7.

⁷³ *Cal. Papal Reg.* v. 186. Cf. R. H. Snape, *Eng. Monastic Finances in Later Middle Ages*, 79–80.

⁷⁴ J. P. Greene, 'Norton Priory', *Current Arch.* xliii. 249; *Norton Priory Excavation*, 1972, plans of claustral buildings; W. Beamont, *Arley Charts*. (1886), p. xix.

⁷⁵ *Cal. Papal Reg.* viii. 169–70.

⁷⁶ 37 D.K.R. 445–6; *Cal. Close*, 1454–61, 373; B.L. Harl. MSS. 2037, f. 182v.; 2038, f. 38v.

⁷⁷ e.g. Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/1, f. 147; B/A/1/6, ff. 141–157v.; B/A/1/7, ff. 213–231v.; B/A/1/8, f. 39; B/A/1/9, ff. 208v.–232v.; B/A/1/12, ff. 190–240v.; B/A/1/13, ff.

129v.–266v.; *Reg. Bransford* (Worcs. Hist. Soc. iv), p. 257; 2nd *Reg. Stretton*, 231–359.

⁷⁸ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/3, f. 138v.; R. Graham, 'The order of St. Antoine de Viennois', *Arch. Jnl.* lxxxiv. 361.

⁷⁹ W. Beamont, *An Account of the Rolls of the Honor of Halton* (1879), 13–14, 32; P.R.O., CHES 25/8 rot. 18.

⁸⁰ P.R.O., CHES 25/12, rot. 23.

⁸¹ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/9, f. 125; P.R.O., CHES 29/147, rot. 24; 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 55. The case interrupted the university studies of members of the house: *Chapters of Augustinian Canons* (Oxford Hist. Soc. lxxiv), 100.

⁸² *Bp. Blythe's Visitations* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 4th ser. vii), 6, 51, 126–7, 171.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 6, 50–1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 7, 51, 126–7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 126–7. The walls of the cloister were refaced in the 16th cent.: Greene, *Norton Priory Excavation*, 1972, 4.

⁸⁶ The abbot had been in debt to the Crown a few years previously: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ii (1), p. 370; ii (2), p. 1484.

⁸⁷ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 6–7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 50–1.

A HISTORY OF CHESHIRE

good administration and discipline given by the two visitations is brought into question by the evidence produced at two inquisitions held at Norton by Bishop Geoffrey Blythe himself in April and May 1522.⁸⁹ The record of proceedings at the inquisitions is confused but it appears that the prior, William Hardeware, who had praised his abbot, William Merton, so enthusiastically in 1518 and 1521 quarrelled with him over money and abused him in letters to a member of another house.⁹⁰ The abbot was examined on the charges at the inquisition in April 1522: he was accused of misconduct with several women, but some of the offences were said to have taken place 30 years previously and most dated before his election as abbot. He was also accused of misusing the resources of the house by cutting down timber and supporting an extravagant household; strangers, including his relatives and one of the bishop's officials were said to be maintained at the expense of the house and one of them lived in the abbey with his wife and two daughters and paid only four marks a year for his rooms.⁹¹ The abbot denied or answered the charges and, in his turn, the prior was required to substantiate his accusations, which appear mostly to have been based on rumour, and to answer countercharges. He confessed that he also had been guilty of fornication and admitted that there had been lapses in the observance of the rule in the house; the latter included singing after compline, breaking of silence, and failure to observe hours of contemplation since no common refectory was maintained. The inquisition seems to have intensified the dispute and a further inquisition in the following month heard that Hardeware had threatened the abbot with a knife during a quarrel. Hardeware fled to Halton where he was reported to have prophesied that the abbot would soon lose office. In view of the revelations of maladministration and scandal it is surprising to discover that by 1524 harmony had apparently been restored and the house was once more in good order. William Merton, who was still abbot, declared that the house was free from debt and the canons well-behaved, although the house was insufficiently enclosed. William Hardeware, still prior, praised his superior and brethren in all things, merely deploring the lack of an inventory and accounts. The rest of the canons agreed that relations between the abbot and convent were peaceful and that religious observances were being maintained.⁹² Nevertheless there is further evidence from the 1530s of the sexual irregularity of some canons: the royal visitors reported in 1536 that two of the community were sodomites and two were incontinent, one with five women.⁹³

In 1535 the gross income was valued at £258 11s. 8d. Spiritual possessions produced £145 9s., while £113 2s. 8d. came from temporal possessions. The net income was £180 7s. 6½d. after the deduction of an

estimated annual expenditure of £78 4s. 1½d. Alms accounted for £24 a year and stipends were paid to two chantry chaplains, one celebrating in a chapel at Aston by Sutton and the other celebrating in the abbey for the souls of the founder and Hugh Dutton; pensions were paid to the abbots of Chester and Vale Royal and £7 a year spent on defences against flooding. The fees of eight bailiffs, a receiver, an auditor and steward of courts and of the abbey's steward, Sir William Brereton, totalled £22 16s. 8d.⁹⁴ The annual value of the estates in 1537 when they had passed to the Crown was £343 13s. 7½d., so that they had been considerably undervalued in 1535. The abbey's property as listed in 1539 consisted of the manor of Norton, lands and rents in Aston by Budworth, Aston by Sutton, Halton, Preston on the Hill, Guilden Sutton, Walton, Daresbury, Newton by Daresbury, Keckwick,⁹⁵ Stockham, Runcorn, Northwich, Lach Dennis, Nether Peover, Budworth, Shurlach, Comberbach, Barnton, Landican, Frodsham, Chester, Rostherne, Millington, Haslington, Warrington (Lancs.), Bold (Lancs.), Penketh (Lancs.), 'Rowsiche' (?Lancs.), Tarbock (Lancs.), Stotfoldshaw (Lancs.), 'Oldgreve iuxta Lymme', and Sowerby; the appropriated churches of Runcorn, Great Budworth, Pirton, Burton on Stather, and Castle Donington, tithes from Guilden Sutton, Halton, Astmoor, 'Halfeld' (Lincs.), and Sutton (Lancs.) and pensions from the churches of Grappenhall, Great Barrow, St. Peter's, Chester, Davenham, and Raby.⁹⁶

In 1536 Norton was included in the list of houses of a yearly value of less than £200 and thus came within the terms of the Act of that year for dissolving the lesser monasteries, even though the royal visitors reported its income to be £260 a year.⁹⁷ The abbot was, however, in trouble with the authorities because two of his servants were accused of coining; he was arrested in the summer of 1535 but the charges were not substantiated.⁹⁸ Although Nicholas Shaxton, bishop of Salisbury, pleaded for the abbot and his house, it was decided to dissolve the abbey and the royal commissioners arrived early in October 1536.⁹⁹ They encountered unexpectedly vigorous opposition, which can possibly be explained by the close connexions between the canons and near-by families which had been revealed by the 1522 inquisition.¹ The sheriff, Sir Piers Dutton, was informed on 8 October that the commissioners, who had packed up the jewels and other valuables and were preparing to leave, had been attacked by the abbot with a force of 200 or 300 supporters and forced to barricade themselves in a tower. Dutton arrived in the middle of the night with a hastily assembled collection of tenants and clients and found the abbot holding a celebratory ox-roasting. He dispersed the rebels and, although most of them escaped by taking to the waters round the abbey in the dark, captured the abbot and three canons and impris-

⁸⁹ For what follows see *ibid.* 90–5, 107–9.

⁹⁰ For the identity of the 'prior of Leez' see *ibid.* 189.

⁹¹ The problem had occurred in the 15th cent.: 3 *Sheaf*, xvii, pp. 62–3.

⁹² *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 126–7.

⁹³ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 141; cf. *ibid.* viii, p. 191; P.R.O., SP 1/81, ff. 191, 191v.

⁹⁴ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 209–10.

⁹⁵ An ancient rent to pay for a lamp in the abbey.

⁹⁶ P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/409, mm. 3–7 (partly printed in Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 686). See also *Lancs. & Ches. Rec. in P.R.O.* i. 102–5.

⁹⁷ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, pp. 141, 517. The house was, however, said to be £200 in debt: *ibid.* p. 141.

⁹⁸ G. Chesters, 'Power Politics and Roguery in Tudor Ches.', *Cheshire Round*, i (no. 2, 1962), 45–7; *Letters and Accounts of Wm. Brereton of Malpas*, 40–1; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, p. 405; viii, p. 397. Dutton's letter announcing the arrest of the abbot is wrongly dated to 1534 (cf. vacancy at Vale Royal; above, Vale Royal abbey); the attempt (G. R. Elton, *Policy & Police*, 322) to date it to 1536 is unconvincing as the house was not dissolved until Oct.: below.

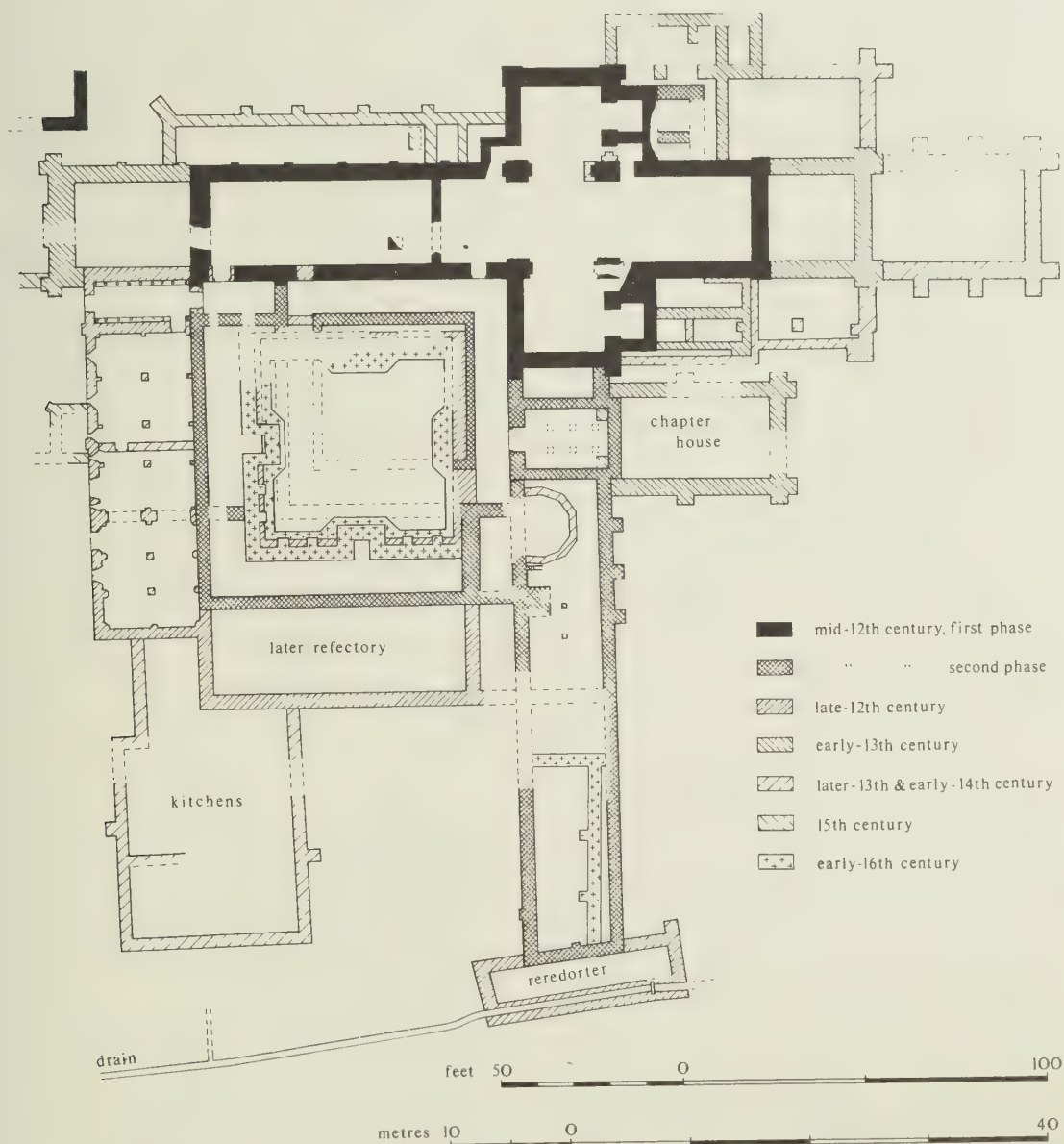
⁹⁹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, x, p. 393; xi, p. 265.

¹ *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 90–5, 107–9.

oned them in Halton castle; the commissioners and their spoil were escorted from the abbey and the royal farmer installed.² Dutton reported on the events at Norton to the chancellor, Sir Thomas Audley, but the abbot and canons were saved from summary execution by events outside Cheshire and by the feud for control of the shire between Dutton and Sir William Brereton. Brereton, who had been the abbey steward since 1525,³ interceded for them with Cromwell, supported by Sir Thomas Boteler who reported that 'the common fame of the county imputes no fault to them'.⁴ Although the king ordered that the abbot and canons should be hanged, since they had stirred up

insurrection,⁵ the Yorkshire rising and the feud between Dutton and Brereton delayed the executions,⁶ and in August 1537 the abbot and canons were released from prison in Chester; in November the abbot was awarded a pension of £24 and in the following month he obtained a dispensation to become a secular priest and hold a benefice. Six other former canons obtained like dispensations.⁷

The site of the abbey and the manor of Norton were sold to Richard Broke in 1545 for £1,512 1s. 9d.⁸ and a house was built in the outer courtyard of the abbey. Most of the monastic buildings were demolished but the western range which had contained the abbot's



THE ABBEY OF ST. MARY, NORTON

² *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, p. 265.

³ P.R.O., SC 6/Hen. VIII/409, m. 7.

⁴ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, pp. 305-6, 413.

⁵ *Ibid.* xi, pp. 305-6.

⁶ *Ibid.* xi, pp. 487-8; xii (1), pp. 61, 585; xii (2), p. 20; 26

D.K.R. 27.

⁷ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xii (2), p. 221; xiii (1), p. 583; *Faculty Off. Regs.*, ed. D. S. Chambers, 72, 86, 98, 117.

⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xx (2), p. 539.

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lodgings was adapted to form the centre block of the new house.⁹ That house was replaced about 1730 but the new house still incorporated the undercroft of the western range of the monastic buildings and those remains were left standing when the second house was demolished in 1928.¹⁰ Excavations since 1971 under the auspices of the Runcorn Development Corporation have established the layout, dimensions, and stages of development of most of the monastic buildings.¹¹

As was probably the case with most monastic houses, the first buildings to be put up at Norton were of timber, and probably provided temporary accommodation for the canons. Excavation has shown that some continued in use long enough to require replacement with larger scale timber structures. Those were occupied until all the permanent stone buildings were ready. The layout out of the claustral plan and the erection of the east end of the church probably began soon after the foundation (1134) and by the end of the 12th century all the principal buildings seem to have been finished. At that time, however, a succession of alterations began, which involved the re-building of the west and south ranges, the extension of the east range, the enlargement of the cloister, the lengthening of both the chancel and the nave, and the building of a new, enlarged chapter house. The new buildings probably were substantially complete when there was a serious fire in 1236. Traces of it were recognized in the excavation of the church and cloister. It is likely to have destroyed the roofs but the only rebuilding of masonry structures that appears to date from the mid 13th century is the cloister arcade. When expansion of the buildings re-started at the end of the 13th century it was concentrated at the east end of the church, where an eastern chapel was added to the chancel, and the side chapels were lengthened. The north side chapel is likely to have been the lady chapel. It was a popular place of burial for members of the laity, and many graves have been found within its walls, some in ornate sandstone coffins. In the early 14th century the church and chapter house were provided with mosaic tile floors. The tiles were fired in a kiln a short distance north of the church. In the 15th century a short north aisle was added to the nave, and

what may have been extra accommodation for the abbot was added to the west side of the west range. In the early 16th century the cloister walks were reconstructed, but the dormitory was reduced in size. In 1429 both church and buildings were said to be ruinous and in 1524 the buildings were reported as being in disrepair.

PRIORS

Peter, occurs at some time between c. 1157 and 1166.¹²

Henry, occurs between c. 1170 and 1194.¹³

Ranulph, occurs between c. 1195 and c. 1220.¹⁴

Andrew, occurs c. 1224–31, 1238.¹⁵

Hugh of Donington, occurs between 1238 and 1249.¹⁶

Roger of Manchester, occurs at some time between 1249 and 1261.¹⁷

Roger of Budworth, or of Lincoln, occurs 1285, 1286.¹⁸

Acharius, occurs 1288.¹⁹

Gilbert, occurs 1310.²⁰

John of Colton, elected 1314, occurs until 1322.²¹

Robert Bernard, appointed 1329, occurs until 1346.²²

Thomas de Fraunkevyle, elected 1349.²³

Walter of Weaverham, occurs between 1356 and 1358.²⁴

Richard Wyche, occurs from 1366 and became the first abbot in 1391.²⁵

ABBOTS

Richard Wyche, died 1400.²⁶

John Shrewsbury, appointed 1401, occurs until 1426.²⁷

John Sutton, died 1441.²⁸

Thomas Westbury, appointed 1441, died 1451.²⁹

Robert Leftwich, elected 1451, resigned 1460.³⁰

Hugh Hurleston, elected 1460, resigned 1469.³¹

John Malbon, elected 1469, occurs 1499.³²

Roger Hall, died 1507.³³

⁹ *Ches. Arch. Bull.* iv. 33. For the 1727 Buck print of the house see Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i, facing p. 482.

¹⁰ *Current Arch.* xliii. 247–8.

¹¹ *Medieval Arch.* xvi. 171–4; xvii. 153–4; xviii. 188; xix. 233; xx. 177; xxi. 223; *Current Arch.* xxxi. 216–20; xliii. 246–50; J. P. Greene, *Norton Priory*. The help of Mr. Greene in preparing the architectural description is gratefully acknowledged.

¹² Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 26; Sir Christopher Hatton's *Bk. of Seals*, ed. L. C. Lloyd and D. M. Stenton, 354, 357.

¹³ Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 940–1216, 178; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 26.

¹⁴ Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 178; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 24, 26.

¹⁵ Knowles, Brooke, and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 178; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 26; *Mag. Reg. Alb.* 253.

¹⁶ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 26; Beamont, *Account of Rolls of Honor of Halton*, 13 (that list is not generally reliable).

¹⁷ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 26; John Rylands Libr., Arley Charts. Box 1, no. 87.

¹⁸ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 26; *Whalley Coucher Bk.* ii. 403; B.L. Harl. MS. 2063, f. 39; *Cat. Anct. D.* iv, A.

8971.

¹⁹ *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 155.

²⁰ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 15; Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/1, f. 58v.

²¹ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/1, f. 60v.; *Whalley Coucher Bk.* ii. 410. A canon of Trentham (Staffs.).

²² Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/2, f. 104; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iii. 233. He was still a member of the house c. 1357; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/3, f. 144v.

²³ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/2, f. 125.

²⁴ *Ibid.* B/A/1/3, ff. 138v., 144v.; *Burscough Cart.* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. xviii), p. 164; *Cat. Anct. D.* iv, A. 9847.

²⁵ V.C.H. *Lancs.* iii. 413; *Cal. Papal Reg.* iv. 405.

²⁶ Lamb. Pal. Libr., Reg. Arundel, i, f. 484v.

²⁷ *Ibid.* ff. 484v.–485; 37 *D.K.R.* 568; P.R.O., CHES 25/12, rot. 13. He was prior and was appointed by Abp. Arundel during his metropolitan visitation.

²⁸ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/9, f. 125; 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 55.

²⁹ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/9, f. 125; B/A/1/10, f. 31. He was prior.

³⁰ *Ibid.* B/A/1/10, f. 31; B/A/1/12, f. 98v.

³¹ *Ibid.* B/A/1/12, ff. 98v., 104v.

³² *Ibid.* f. 104v.; 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 81.

³³ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 683; Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/141, f. 56.

William Merton, elected 1507, occurs 1524.³⁴
 Thomas Birkenhead, occurs 1525, surrendered the
 abbey in 1536.³⁵

A seal in use in the 13th century³⁶ is a pointed oval

about 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. It depicts the Virgin crowned and seated on a throne; she holds a palm in her left hand and the Child on her right knee with a globe surmounted by a cross in His left hand. Legend, lombardic: [SIG]ILLUM . . . DE NORTUNE.

HOUSE OF PREMONSTRATENSIAN CANONS

THE PRIORY OF WARBURTON

THERE was a short-lived cell³⁷ of the Premonstratensian abbey of Cockersand (Lancs.) at Warburton on the Mersey border of Cheshire and Lancashire. Some canons may have been established there during the 1190s when the Cockersand canons were involved in a dispute with Leicester abbey.³⁸ After the death of John the Constable in 1190 Adam de Dutton gave the moiety of the vill of Warburton, which he had acquired with his wife Agnes, daughter of Roger, son of Alfred de Cumbray, to the church of St. Mary and St. Werburgh of Warburton and the Premonstratensian canons there.³⁹ The grant was made for the benefit of the souls of Adam's son, John, who was buried at Warburton, and of John the Constable, and for the bodies and souls of Roger the Constable and his wife, who were evidently alive at the time.⁴⁰ Adam de Dutton and Geoffrey, another of his sons, witnessed a grant by their friend and associate, Gramam de Lostock, to the canons at Warburton of lands in Lostock Gramam whose bounds they had marked with crosses and also of pasturage for 40 cows and 20 mares for three years and for 60 sheep for one year.⁴¹ Adam de Dutton was seneschal of Halton for the constables of Chester and in the closing years of the 12th century and the early years of the 13th some small grants of land across the Mersey in Lancashire were made to the canons at Warburton by those who held lands which

formed part of the Widnes fee of the barons of Halton. Richard of Tarbock, the brother of Robert of Lathom who founded Burscough priory (Lancs.), granted land in Tarbock in Huyton;⁴² Amabel, the widow of Robert of Lathom, gave land in Knowsley in Huyton;⁴³ her step-son, Richard, made a grant of land in Allerton in Childwall which was increased by Richard of Allerton and his son, Robert.⁴⁴ Sigerth of Sutton made two grants of land in Sutton in Prescott to the prior and canons of Warburton, one of which was witnessed by the three brothers, Adam, Hugh, and Geoffrey de Dutton; after her death, however, the lands were re-granted to Cockersand abbey.⁴⁵ In the same way Alan de Halsall, who held part of Maghull in Halsall from Roger the Constable, confirmed to Cockersand the grant of an assart which had originally been made to the brethren at Warburton by one of his subtenants.⁴⁶ Those grants and re-grants indicate that the community at Warburton had failed to establish itself, and before 1216, Roger, abbot of Cockersand, surrendered to Geoffrey de Dutton all the gifts made by his father, Adam, 'to us and our house of Cockersand in Warburton', apart from eight oxgangs of land in return for which the abbot and convent undertook to maintain a chaplain at Warburton to say masses for Adam's soul.⁴⁷ In 1271 Cockersand abbey sold the advowson of the chapel of Warburton and all their land and rights there to the second Geoffrey de Dutton for 80 marks.⁴⁸

FRIARIES

THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS OF CHESTER⁴⁹

THE Grey Friars were settled in Chester by Albert of Pisa, the minister of the English province, in 1237 or

1238. According to Thomas of Eccleston their settlement met with considerable opposition and it seems that Alexander Stavensby, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1224–38), feared that there would be insufficient alms forthcoming from the citizens of

³⁴ Lich. Jt. R. O., B/A/1/141, f. 56; *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 126.

³⁵ Harwood, *History and Antiquities of Lichfield* (1806), 413; *Faculty Off. Regs.*, ed. D. S. Chambers, 117; above. He was not a member of the house in 1524: *Bp. Blythe's Visitations*, 126–7.

³⁶ B.L. Seal xciv. 31; John Rylands Libr., Arley Chats. Box 1, no. 20; cf. sketches in B.L. Harl. MSS. 2063, f. 39; 2074, f. 127. It is not clear that the seal in Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 685 belonged to the house.

³⁷ There is no evidence to support the suggestion (D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses, Eng. and Wales* (2nd edn. 1971), 336, 400) that the cell superseded a hospital. One surviving reference to a prior at Warburton (3 *Sheaf*, 1, pp. 34–5) indicates conventual organisation.

³⁸ V.C.H. Lancs. ii. 154.

³⁹ *Cockersand Chartulary*, iv (Chetham Soc. N.S. xliii), 735–6. For Adam de Dutton and his wife see Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 21–2.

⁴⁰ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 735–6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 737–8. For the association of Gramam de Lostock

with Adam and Geoffrey de Dutton see Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 18, 24, 25n., 32, 41.

⁴² *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 607–8; V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 177.

⁴³ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 606–7; V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 158.

⁴⁴ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 599–61; V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 129.

⁴⁵ 3 *Sheaf*, 1, pp. 34–5; *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 596–8; V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 356, 358, 360.

⁴⁶ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 543–4; V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 215.

⁴⁷ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 738–9; V.C.H. Lancs. ii. 157–8; H. M. Colvin, *The White Canons in Eng.* 142 (where *conventus* is ascribed to Warburton rather than Cockersand). Roger, 'priest of Warburton', witnessed a deed to which Agatha, dau. of Adam de Dutton, was a party: John Rylands Libr., Arley Chats. Box 1, no. 102. Abbey Croft, adjoining the old rectory in Warburton, is traditionally supposed to be the 8 oxgangs confirmed to Cockersand by Geoff. de Dutton: *P.N. Ches.* ii. 35; N. Warburton, *Warburton: the Village and the Family* (London, 1970), 26.

⁴⁸ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 735, 739–40.

⁴⁹ There is a lengthy account of the friary by J. H. E. Bennett in *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxiv (1), 4–85.

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Chester to support both the Franciscans and the Dominicans, who were already settled there.⁵⁰ Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, the leading ecclesiastical patron of the English Franciscans, rebuked Stavensby for his insulting behaviour towards the friars in front of the people of Chester and pointed out the beneficial effects of the Franciscans' presence; experience had shown that the presence of both orders in the same city tended to stimulate the flow of alms.⁵¹ Early in 1240 Henry III gave his approval for the construction of a house for the Grey Friars in Chester; the site was to the north of Watergate Street, opposite the Dominican convent and conveniently placed for the collection of alms from travellers entering Chester through the Watergate.⁵² The *custodes* of the county of Chester were ordered to help with the building and in the following years the king made several contributions towards the cost of constructing the church and other buildings: £10 in 1241, £5 in 1245, and 10 marks in 1247.⁵³ In addition, in 1245 the friars were permitted to take as much stone as they required from the castle fosse and in the following year they were allowed to breach the city wall in order to bring in stone and timber for their building operations.⁵⁴ The approval of the citizens of Chester was necessary for the latter favour and also for the removal, in 1245, of a lane which the friars claimed harmed them and their buildings.⁵⁵ Just over a century later the friars acquired a plot of land 103 feet by 32 feet from the prioress and nuns of St. Mary's for the enlargement of their house and there was a further extension of the buildings in 1360.⁵⁶

Royal generosity and support in the early days of the establishment of the house were sufficiently remarkable for the friars to address the king as their founder in a petition of 1331.⁵⁷ As a result of the petition the members of the house were taken into the king's protection and were granted a licence to construct two hand-mills in their house and freely to grind corn and malt there and at other mills in the city.⁵⁸ There is little other evidence of royal support during the 14th century, although the Black Prince made grants of money to the Grey Friars and to the other houses of friars in Chester in 1353 and 1358 and also bought back for the Grey Friars a Bible which had been stolen from them.⁵⁹ The Franciscans, however, seem to have remained popular with the citizens of Chester and the surrounding areas during the later Middle Ages, although the size of bequests tended to diminish.⁶⁰ An examination of 53 surviving local wills for the period

from 1400 to 1540 has shown that the Grey Friars were mentioned as beneficiaries in 30 and in three or four they received larger legacies than the other mendicant orders.⁶¹ It seems that at the end of the 13th century the house was being used as a safe-deposit; when John of Barrow, chaplain, lay dying in 1293 he gave £33 10s. which he had on deposit there to the friars to employ a chaplain to pray for his soul and to pay their debts and supply their needs. The friars had some difficulty recovering the money, when it was seized with other sums of money deposited in Chester and sent to the Exchequer.⁶² It is possible that two friars minor of Chester who were imprisoned and then pardoned in 1392 for seizing and concealing £100 worth of the goods and chattels of Thomas Moston, approver of the royal mills of the Dee, were attempting to secure a generous legacy from a benefactor who had died heavily in debt to the king.⁶³ Among the larger bequests was the gift of an annual rent of 10s. from three houses in Chester for the celebration of two obits for John Chamberlain and his family; in 1403 the warden, William Seggesley, petitioned the prince of Wales that the rent should be held in trust for the convent by the mayor of Chester.⁶⁴ Only one burial in the church is recorded, that of Robert Grosvenor of Hulme c. 1286.⁶⁵ In the earlier 16th century the Grey Friars attracted fewer gifts and legacies than the Carmelites and the occasional legacy for repairs to the church and convent, such as 6s. 8d. from Margaret Hawarden in 1521 and 3s. 4d. from Dr. Thomas Sparkes in 1527, proved insufficient to maintain the buildings.⁶⁶ In 1528 the warden and convent confirmed an arrangement by which the merchants and sailors of Chester had been given unrestricted use of the nave of the church, 'which they have built', and of the three aisles for the storage of their sails and tools in return for repairing the church.⁶⁷

The Chester house was one of the nine friaries forming the custody of Worcester.⁶⁸ Very little is known about its size and personnel. In the 1280s it was smaller than the Dominican convent and it appears never to have been large.⁶⁹ Names appearing in ordination lists in one diocese are not a reliable guide to the size of houses but during the episcopate of Robert Stretton (1360–85) only ten candidates in Lichfield diocese were identified as from the Chester friary, compared with over 60 from Lichfield;⁷⁰ the numbers taking orders from the house seem to have decreased further in the 15th century.⁷¹ The names of those receiving orders indicate that many members of

⁵⁰ *De Adventu Fratrum Minorum*, ed. A. G. Little, 80; *Letters of Rob. Grosseteste* (Rolls Ser.), 120–2.

⁵¹ *Letters of Rob. Grosseteste* (Rolls Ser.), 121.

⁵² *Close R.* 1237–42, 171; below, Dominicans of Chester.

⁵³ *Close R.* 1237–42, 171; *Cal. Lib.* 1240–5, 68; 1245–51, 6, 140. In 1246 the king made a gift of two silver-gilt chalices: *Cal. Lib.* 1245–51, 19.

⁵⁴ *Close R.* 1242–7, 339, 408.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 339.

⁵⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1330–4, 360; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 386.

⁵⁷ P.R.O., SC 8/194/9675.

⁵⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1330–4, 76, 89.

⁵⁹ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 115, 308; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 274. For a gift of books to the house at that period see A. G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford* (Oxf. Hist. Soc. xx), 240.

⁶⁰ Most bequests are noted in J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv(1), 17–18, 21–8.

⁶¹ *Ch. in Chester*, 96–7.

⁶² *Cal. Inq. Misc.* i, p. 471; *Cal. Close*, 1288–96, 372; *Cal. Chanc. Wts.* i. 52.

⁶³ *Cal. Pat.* 1392–6, 117; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 22.

⁶⁴ J.C.A.S. xxiv (1), 23–5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 72–3.

⁶⁶ *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, i (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xxxiii), 17; ii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] li), 7; *Ch. in Chester*, 97.

⁶⁷ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 29.

⁶⁸ E.H.R. xxxiv. 206.

⁶⁹ *Tribute to an Antiquary*, ed. F. Emmison and R. Stephens, 110–11.

⁷⁰ *1st Reg. Stretton*, 159–396; V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 269.

⁷¹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7 (1398–1414: 3); B/A/1/9 (1419–47: 6); B/A/1/10 (1447–52: 1); B/A/1/11 (1453–9: 1); B/A/1/12 (1459–90: 7); B/A/1/13 (1492–1502: 1).

the convent come from the Chester region but Harmon de Colonia and Gerald de Frisia may have come from further afield.⁷² During the 15th century three or four members of the house were licensed to hear confessions.⁷³ In one of the poems attributed to Iolo Goch, the friend of Owen Glendower, there is some abuse of the Grey Friars of Chester, their poor clothing, bare feet and denunciations of immorality, which redounds to the credit of the house.⁷⁴ The Grey Friars seem to have been less involved in local disorder in the 15th century than the other mendicant houses in the city, although the warden was beaten up in 1427, perhaps during a private quarrel.⁷⁵ The last warden, Dr. William Wall, a local man, improved the water supply of Chester by beginning to build the conduit at Boughton.⁷⁶

It was William Wall who surrendered the house to Richard Ingworth, bishop of Dover on 15 August 1538.⁷⁷ There were then seven friars living in the convent,⁷⁸ and it was the poorest of the three Chester friaries. The furnishings of the church, vestry, kitchen, brewhouse, and bulging house were sold for £3 4s. 8d. and two alabaster tables, service books, glass, iron, and a 'poor' pair of organs in the church were sold for a further £2 10s. The total of £6 3s. 8d. raised by the sale did not meet the debts of £12 8s. 11d.⁷⁹ Ingworth removed a chalice, a mazer, and six spoons before handing the property over to the mayor and he noted 'no lead nor rents but their gardens'.⁸⁰ The warden had anticipated the dissolution by making long leases of parts of the precinct to citizens of Chester; property leased included a house 'called the ostrye', a chamber 'called the bysshopp chamber', the convent garden, an orchard to the east of the chancel and a walled pasture used by the friars 'for the maintenance of their hospitality'. Richard Ingworth suspected that there was 'craft' in some of the leases and it was later claimed that one indenture dated 6 April 1538 was in fact sealed three days before the surrender.⁸¹ The buildings and gardens were initially leased for 21 years at a rent of 45s. 8d. to Richard Hough, a Cheshire man related

by marriage to Thomas Cromwell, and it appears that Hough was sold the site for £12 in 1540. In 1544, however, it was sold once more, together with the sites of the other two friaries and other property, to John Cokkes, a London salter, for a total of £358 6s. 10d.⁸² By the early 17th century the church had been converted into a house and in 1778 a new linen hall was built on part of the site.⁸³

The friary occupied a walled, rectangular site of approximately seven acres to the north of Watergate Street; it was bounded on the west by the city wall and on the east by Linenhall Street.⁸⁴ The precinct was entered by a gate-house at the southern end of Linenhall Street. Building operations in 1920 uncovered several sections of wall and indicated that the friary may have been built on Roman foundations.⁸⁵ The church seems to have been about 200 feet long with a wide, aisled nave. It had a steeple with 'a sharpe spyar' and two bells and also a 'crosse yle' on the south, probably a large transeptal chapel projecting from the nave and similar to chapels found in some surviving Irish friaries.⁸⁶ The inventory drawn up in 1538 indicates that the cloister adjoined the north aisle of the nave, yet a mid-17th century plan of the precinct shows a cloister to the north-west of the church and separated from it by a range of buildings.⁸⁷

WARDENS

William Seggesley, occurs 1403.⁸⁸

David Bromfield, occurs 1434.⁸⁹

— Lewis, occurs 1479.⁹⁰

William Wall, D. Theol., occurs 1537, surrendered the friary in 1538.⁹¹

The seal of the friary,⁹² a pointed oval about 1½ by 1 in., depicts Our Lord crowned and wearing a long robe, reigning from the Cross. The legend, lombardic: *SIGILLUM FRATRUM MINORUM CESTRIE*.

⁷² Ibid. B/A/1/11, f. 108v.; B/A/1/12, f. 209v.

⁷³ Ibid. B/A/1/7, ff. 142v., 152v., 156, 196v.; B/A/1/12, f. 125.

⁷⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, xxiv, p. 5. ⁷⁵ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 145; P.R.O., CHES 25/12, rot. 15d.

⁷⁶ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 51–3; B.L. Harl. MS. 2125, f. 209; Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, 1501 to 1540, 603.

⁷⁷ L. & P. Hen. VIII, xiii (2), p. 35.

⁷⁸ Ibid.; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 31. For another version of the list of names see *Faculty Off. Regs.* ed. D. S. Chambers, 164.

⁷⁹ L. & P. Hen. VIII, xiii (1), pp. 476–7; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 33; Ches. R.O., DDX 43/54.

⁸⁰ L. & P. Hen. VIII, xiii (1), pp. 476–7. There was some lead guttering on the north aisle and the cloister: Ches. R.O., DDX 43/54.

⁸¹ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 33, 37–9. There was also a 'bishop's lodging' in the Lichfield friary: V.C.H. *Staffs.* iii. 270.

⁸² Ches. R.O., DDX 43/53; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 35–9. The latter sale ignored the rights of the lessees and resulted in litigation: J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 39–42.

⁸³ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 45–7. For a full account of the history of the site see *ibid.* 42–50.

⁸⁴ See the discussion and plan (from B.L. Harl. MS. 2073, f. 92/2) in J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), 59–70. The modern Grey

Friars Lane to the south of Watergate Street is a 19th-cent. misnomer: *ibid.* 59–60.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 67–8.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 33; A. R. Martin, *Franciscan Architecture in Eng.* (Brit. Soc. Franciscan Studies, xviii), 232. The reconstruction of the ch. plan in J.C.A.S. N.S. xxiv (1), facing p. 69 is improbable.

⁸⁷ Ches. R.O., DDX 43/54; B.L. Harl. MS. 2079, f. 92/2. It has been suggested (Martin, *Franciscan Architecture*, 231–2) that there was a second cloister or that the cloister was separated from the church by an open yard as at London and Walsingham but that is unlikely in view of the statement in the inventory that the lead spouts on the north aisle descended into the guttering of the cloister.

⁸⁸ P.R.O., CHES 2/76, rot. 9 (not Leggesley as in 36 D.K.R. 102).

⁸⁹ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 145. An Helyas Bromfield took orders in 1435 and 1436: Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, ff. 229v.–30.

⁹⁰ J. H. E. Bennett, 'A Letter of Confraternity of the Grey Friars, Chester', J.C.A.S. N.S. xxviii (2), 213.

⁹¹ Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, 1501 to 1540, 603; above.

⁹² *Franciscan Hist. and Legend in Eng. Medieval Art*, ed. A. G. Little, 88 and plate iii. Although the matrix is said to be 13th-cent. the only surviving impression is on a document dated 1528: Chester City R.O., illustrative material, no. 32.

A HISTORY OF CHESHIRE

THE DOMINICAN FRIARS OF CHESTER⁹³

THE Black Friars were established in Chester by 1237 or 1238 when the appearance of the Grey Friars alarmed their patron, Alexander Stavensby, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield. So vehement was his reaction to the prospect of the two orders competing for alms that he has been thought responsible for establishing the Dominicans in Chester, although there is no definite evidence and it is equally possible that they came there under the patronage of Ranulph III, earl of Chester.⁹⁴ Stavensby, however, almost certainly presented them with the books which formed the nucleus of the convent's library.⁹⁵ The friary was established on the south side of Watergate Street and probably the friars at first used the nearby chapel of St. Nicholas; that would explain an early reference to the 'Friars Preachers of St. Nicholas'.⁹⁶ A supply of water for the friary was secured in 1276 when the friars were permitted to pipe water from Boughton through the city wall.⁹⁷ In 1361 they were licensed to acquire a plot of land next to their garden, perhaps an indication of an extension of their buildings at a period when the other two orders were also extending theirs.⁹⁸ Certain 'necessary' buildings were still lacking in 1467 when Cecily Torbock bequeathed £10 towards their cost⁹⁹ and some rebuilding was undertaken in the community's last years: Sir Ralph Egerton bequeathed the Black Friars 20s. in 1526 'towards the building of their fratriye',¹ and a few years earlier Margaret Hawarden left 6s. 8d. and some pieces of lead for the repair of the church.²

In 1274 Edward I ordered the justice of Chester to continue a payment of 40d. a week to the Friars Preachers of Chester and those 'ancient alms' of £8 13s. 4d. were still being paid in the reign of Henry VII.³ The fact that by 1501 it was believed that the alms were first granted to the house by Ranulph III, earl of Chester, suggests that they had been paid from its foundation.⁴ During the Welsh campaign of 1277 Edward I sent £3 13s. to the friars for food and there were further payments during his stay in Chester in 1284.⁵ Besides the continued payment of the 'ancient alms' there were a few further signs of particular royal favour: in 1291 the convent received 100s. from Queen Eleanor's executors and in 1312 when the provincial chapter of the order met at Chester the usual alms were granted with the addition of 100s. for

the soul of Piers Gaveston.⁶ No further royal grants in money or kind are recorded apart from grants of alms in 1353 and 1358 from the Black Prince which were made indiscriminately to the three orders of friars in Chester.⁷ When, however, the friars were granted in 1384 the privilege of grinding their corn and malt free of toll at the king's mills for ten years, the friary was said to be a royal foundation and under royal patronage; in 1395 the privilege was extended in perpetuity.⁸

Some of the early benefactors of the house were more eminent than those of the other friaries, possibly as a result of royal patronage. Fulk de Orreby, a former justice of Chester, gave half a mark for the light before St. Mary's image in St. Nicholas's, the church of the Friars Preachers, c. 1264 and Thomas, earl of Lancaster, gave 20s. sometime after Michaelmas 1305; a bequest was also received from Henry, earl of Lincoln, on his death in 1311.⁹ The Dominicans do not appear, however, to have been as popular as the other two mendicant orders were with the inhabitants of Chester and the surrounding area in the later Middle Ages. They are mentioned in only 25 out of 53 surviving local wills in the period from 1400 to 1540, compared with 30 bequests to the Grey Friars and 35 to the White Friars.¹⁰ Bequests continued, however, until a few years before the dissolution of the house and ranged from a bushel of barley in 1526 to all the theological books of a priest in 1505.¹¹ Although there are few surviving references to burials in the church or precincts of the friary they evidently soon became common enough to cause alarm to the monks of St. Werburgh's and the canons of St. John's. Early in the history of the house the Black Friars agreed not to encourage the citizens of Chester to seek burial with them and to take only a third of the burial dues of those who wished to be buried within the precincts but would customarily have been buried in the graveyards of St. John's or St. Werburgh's; the friars were to keep all legacies and to be entitled to all the oblations of non-citizens and strangers who chose to be buried by them.¹² When Henry de Bernham was buried there the king replaced, in April 1295, the cloth of gold which the friars had used from their store.¹³

The friary, which was in the visitation of Oxford,¹⁴ does not appear to have been a large house. It was certainly the smallest of the three Chester friaries at their dissolution: only five members witnessed the act of surrender.¹⁵ An estimate that there were 38 friars in

⁹³ There is an account of the friary by J. H. E. Bennett in *J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 29-58* which is based to a large extent on C. F. R. Palmer, 'The Friars Preachers of Chester', *The Reliquary*, xxiii. 97-103.

⁹⁴ Bennett, *J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 31*; W. A. Hinnebusch, *The Early Eng. Friars Preachers*, 105; above, Franciscans. For the connexion with Ranulph III, see below.

⁹⁵ N. R. Kerr, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (1964 edn.), 50, 247. The 'Mag. Alexander' and 'Mag. Alexander de Staneby' who donated two 13th-cent. MSS. was probably Stavensby.

⁹⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii. 301; B. L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 123.

⁹⁷ *Cal. Pat. 1272-81*, 165; *J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 45*.

⁹⁸ *Blk. Prince's Reg. iii. 421, 423*.

⁹⁹ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 100-1. Elaborate services of commemoration for Cecily Torbock were confirmed by the provincial chapter in 1471: B. L. Harl. MS. 2176, f. 27.

¹ *T.H.S.L.C. lxix. 110*.

² *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, ii (Chetham

Soc. [1st ser.] li), 7; below.

³ *Cal. Close, 1272-9, 142*; 26 D.K.R. 20. For a list of payments see *J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 43-4*.

⁴ 26 D.K.R. 20; *Reliquary*, xxiii. 97.

⁵ P.R.O., E 101/350/23, mm. 2, 3; A. Taylor, 'Royal Alms & Oblations in the later 13th cent.', *Tribute to an Antiquary*, ed. F. Emmison and R. Stephens, 110-11.

⁶ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 99.

⁷ *Blk. Prince's Reg. iii. 115, 308*.

⁸ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 99-100; *Cal. Pat. 1381-5*, 379; 1392-6, 601.

⁹ *J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 46*; *Deeds and Papers of Moore Fam.* (R.S.L.C. lxvii), p. 146; 1 *Sheaf*, iii, p. 264.

¹⁰ *Ch. in Chester*, 96. For a list of bequests see *J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 45-50*.

¹¹ 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 93; xx, p. 71.

¹² *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii (Chetham Soc. N.S. lxxxii), p. 301. ¹³ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 99.

¹⁴ Hinnebusch, *Early Eng. Friars Preachers*, 213.

¹⁵ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (2), p. 35.

the house in the early 14th century would seem to be an exaggeration,¹⁶ although the numbers of those ordained in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield indicate that the house was probably at its most numerous at about that time: 15 members received orders during the episcopate of Roger Northburgh (1321–58), compared to only four under Robert Stretton (1358–85).¹⁷ The number of ordinations remained low for the rest of the Middle Ages and the names of those ordained indicate mainly local recruitment.¹⁸ Two notable Dominican scholars had connexions with the Chester convent in its first half century: William of Macclesfield, who won an international reputation as a defender of the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas, is said to have been a member of the Chester convent early in his career and Henry de Esseburn, a noted philosopher and theologian, is said to have spent his leisure when prior of the Chester convent producing scholarly works.¹⁹ Some vestiges of intellectual activity remained in the 15th century: in 1476 Thomas Robison, who had studied theology at Bologna, was allowed to transfer from Chester to his native Glasgow to teach the liberal arts.²⁰ The house was evidently regarded as well-disciplined in 1356 when an unruly friar was transferred there from King's Langley 'to be chastised according to the rule'.²¹ With the citizens of Chester and with their fellow religious, however, the friars' relations were not always happy. In 1384 the prior and convent brought charges against two citizens of Chester before the conservator of the order's privileges in England²² and in 1464 a member of the house was accused of killing a baker at the gates of the friary.²³ In the mid 15th century the Black Friars were involved with the Carmelites in riot and in 1454 the prior and several friars of the Dominican convent were accused of attacking a servant of the abbot of Chester; the feud was still active nearly 10 years later when the prior was bound over to keep the peace towards the abbot.²⁴ There was also some rivalry with the Carmelites and at the end of the century one of the Dominicans was charged with stabbing the Carmelites' prior.²⁵

The friary was surrendered to Richard Ingworth, bishop of Dover, on 15 August 1538. Ingworth removed a chalice, some sealed leases and other documents, including a bill of debts totalling £15 16s. 4d., before handing the property over to the mayor. As with the other friaries in the city there was very little

lead on the site: only half the choir and two 'payns of the cloyster' were leaded.²⁶ Although the vestry contained many copes and vestments, probably accumulated bequests, the house as a whole was impoverished. The inventory drawn up by Ingworth lists contents only for the choir and the vestry, perhaps an indication that the rest of the church was ruinous and disused.²⁷ Other buildings mentioned in the inventory and later documents are the old hall, the chapter house, the frater, the dormer, the prior's chamber, the sub-prior's chamber, the chamber over the church door, the new chamber, the kitchen, the buttery, and the old buttery.²⁸ The visitor noted that the convent had an annual income from rents of £5 6s. 8d. and in the years before the dissolution the prior had made long leases of the gardens, orchards, and tenements surrounding the house, two of which were made only a few weeks before the surrender of the friary.²⁹ In 1537 some ruinous buildings, gardens, and orchards to the north and east of the house and church were leased to Ralph Waryne for 101 years; in 1539 Waryne petitioned for a lease of the convent, which lay at the back of his house.³⁰ The conventual buildings were, however, leased to Thomas Smith of Chester in July 1543 for 21 years at an annual rent of 13s. 4d. and the whole property was acquired by John Cokkes of London in February 1544; in 1561 the site came into the possession of the Dutton family.³¹

The friary occupied c. 5½ a. bounded by Watergate Street to the north, Nicholas Street to the east, Walls' Lane (or Black Friars) to the south, and the city wall to the west.³² The precinct was bisected by an alley (known as Grey Friars in 1978) leading from the east gate to the west gate.³³ The discovery of human remains indicates that the graveyard, and possibly the church, lay in the south-west section of the site but no traces of the buildings remain.³⁴ Part of the site, however, was excavated between 1976 and 1978.³⁵

PRIORS

Henry of Spalding, occurs 1238, 1241.³⁶

John, occurs 1262.³⁷

Henry de Esseburn, died c. 1280.³⁸

John Arneway, occurs 1292–3.³⁹

William of Melbourne, occurs 1344.⁴⁰

William of Bury, occurs 1352.⁴¹

¹⁶ Hinnebusch, *Early Eng. Friars Preachers*, 273ff. The surviving evidence of grants of alms renders the figure doubtful; if the grant made by Edw. I on 21 Aug. 1277 of 25s. 8d. for 4 days was for food at 4d. per head per day, it would indicate 19 members: *Reliquary*, xxiii. 98. The alms given in 1284 do not seem to have been made at a per-capita rate but do indicate that the Dominicans were the most numerous: Taylor, 'Royal Alms & Oblations', 110–11.

¹⁷ A. B. Emden, *Survey of Dominicans in Eng.* 33. Those figures may be too low as friars from the Chester convent may have been ordained in the diocese of St. Asaph.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 33, 68–85.

¹⁹ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 98; Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, i. 647; ii. 1200; Hinnebusch, *Early Eng. Friars Preachers*, 339, 410–12.

²⁰ J. Durkan and J. Kirk, *The University of Glasgow, 1451–1577*, 171; B.L. Add. MS. 32446, f. 10.

²¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1354–8, 444.

²² *Reg. Gilbert* (Cant. & York. Soc.), 46.

²³ P.R.O., CHES 29/169, rot. 25.

²⁴ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 49.

²⁶ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (1), p. 477; xiii (2), p. 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.* xiii (1), p. 477.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; *Reliquary*, xxiii. 102–3. The list suggests that some of the domestic buildings had been recently replaced: above.

²⁹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (1), p. 477; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 50–1. After the dissolution, however, the whole site yielded only £4 12s. a year: *Reliquary*, xxiii. 102.

³⁰ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 51; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), p. 62.

³¹ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 103.

³² For a full discussion of its position see J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 32–6.

³³ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 103; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 39.

³⁴ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxix. 37–9.

³⁵ S. Ward, 'Grey Friars Court Excavations 1976–8: Summary Report' (Grosvenor Museum, 1979).

³⁶ *Mag. Reg. Alb.* 252, 258–9; *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i. 199.

³⁷ B.L. Harl. MS. 2072, f. 43.

³⁸ *Reliquary*, xxiii. 98.

³⁹ B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185v.

⁴⁰ P.R.O., CHES 29/56, rot. 6v.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, CHES 29/63, rot. 13.

A HISTORY OF CHESHIRE

Thomas Belot, occurs 1380–1.⁴²
 Richard Runcorn, occurs 1395, 1408–10.⁴³
 Richard Torbock, occurs 1415–16.⁴⁴
 Robert Lancelyn, occurs 1435.⁴⁵
 Thomas Wooton, occurs 1443–4.⁴⁶
 John Brown, occurs 1452–5.⁴⁷
 Robert Holt, occurs 1457–8, 1459.⁴⁸
 John Browne, occurs 1463–4.⁴⁹
 John Holland, occurs 1468–70.⁵⁰
 Matthew Eves, occurs 1473.⁵¹
 Thomas Waterton, occurs 1480–1, 1496.⁵²
 Matthew Eves, occurs 1506.⁵³
 Hugh Brecknock, occurs 1537, surrendered the friary in 1538.⁵⁴

A defaced impression of the priory seal on a document dated 1506⁵⁵ is described as vesica-shaped 'bearing two priestly figures'. The legend, also defaced, is said to read: SIGILLUM PRIORIS PRE-DICATORUM.

THE CARMELITE FRIARS OF CHESTER⁵⁶

ALTHOUGH the White Friars were established in Chester by 1277 when they were given alms for food by Edward I, it was some years before they acquired a permanent home.⁵⁷ An inquisition was held in April 1290 to discover the losses which would be occasioned by the grant of seven houses by Hugh Payn to the Friars of Mount Carmel; the friars were to live on the site and build themselves a church there.⁵⁸ There seems to have been some opposition to them initially, possibly because of their involvement in litigation,⁵⁹ but any criticism was stilled by a convenient miracle during a procession in the abbey church: an image of the Virgin Mary pointed out the Carmelites as her beloved and forechosen brothers.⁶⁰ The house was firmly established and popular by the mid 14th century when the buildings were extended. In 1350 the friars acquired part of two lanes to the north and west of their priory and in 1354 the Black Prince permitted them to acquire land 200 feet by 160 feet to enlarge their house; he also pardoned them for purchasing

land in the city without permission.⁶¹ His gift of eight oaks in the previous year was probably for the new building;⁶² in addition, the Carmelites, like the other orders of friars, also received gifts of money from him at this period: £6 13s. 4d. in 1353 and 13s. 4d. in 1358.⁶³ In 1367 the prior and the whole convent promised a special daily commemoration of Thomas de Stathom and Isabel, his wife, in return for gifts for the maintenance of the friars and the building of their house. In addition, since the house 'had hitherto no founder', Thomas and Isabel and their heirs were to be regarded by the friars as their founders.⁶⁴ In 1495 the steeple of the church was rebuilt and the new, elegant spire became a valued landmark for sailors.⁶⁵

Thomas of Macclesfield, by will proved in 1303, left 6s. 8d. to the Carmelites but 40s. each to the Franciscans and Dominicans;⁶⁶ that possibly reflects the uncertain start of the White Friars. They grew in popularity, however, from the mid 14th century and are mentioned in 35 out of 53 surviving local wills between 1400 and 1540. In the earlier 16th century they were the most popular of the three mendicant orders in Chester and the value of the bequests made to them almost equalled the combined total of those made to the Franciscans and Dominicans.⁶⁷ Although unlike the Grey and Black Friars they received few marks of special royal favour, in 1400 Henry, prince of Wales, allowed them to grind their corn free at the royal mills of the Dee after they had complained that they had been impoverished by a great murrain and 'a raid committed in the parts round about them'.⁶⁸ In 1348 Sir Gilbert de Haydock established a perpetual chantry in the house at a cost of 40 marks and in the same year John Bars left 1s. each to four named members of the house.⁶⁹ The friars seem to have enjoyed a special relationship with the carpenters of Chester: in 1408 Robert Schot left wax for the carpenters' light in the church and at the dissolution the friars were receiving a rent of 6d. a year for the carpenters' house *pro pagentibus suis imponendis*.⁷⁰ The priory church became a popular burial place for the richer members of Chester society in the later Middle Ages, and a graveyard is first mentioned in 1317–18.⁷¹ The first surviving evidence for such a burial is the request

⁴² B.L. Harl. MS. 2025, f. 28.

⁴³ 36 D.K.R. 181, 414; B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185v.

⁴⁴ B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185v. Possibly a relative of Cecily Torbock: above.

⁴⁵ Chester City R.O., CR 65/2/32.

⁴⁶ B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185v.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 146.

⁴⁸ B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 185v.; Chester City R.O., MB/5, f. 48.

⁴⁹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2057, f. 105v.; P.R.O., CHES 29/169, rot. 25.

⁵⁰ 37 D.K.R. 412, 475.

⁵¹ Ibid. 693.

⁵² B.L. Harl. MS. 2057, f. 105v.; Chester City R.O., MB/8, f. 64.

⁵³ *Hist. of Birch Chapel* (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xlvii), 218.

⁵⁴ *Reliquary*, xxiii, 101; *Faculty Off. Regs.* ed. D. S. Chambers, 164.

⁵⁵ *Hist. of Birch Chapel* 218.

⁵⁶ There is a lengthy account of the priory by J. H. E. Bennett in J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 5–48.

⁵⁷ P.R.O., E 101/350/23, m. 2. They were also given alms in 1284: *Tribute to an Antiquary*, 110–11. They received 17s. 4d. for 3 days' food compared to the Franciscans (£1 6s. 8d.), the Dominicans (£2 5s. 7d.), and the Friars of the Sack (8s.).

⁵⁸ P.R.O., C 143/13, no. 7. A charter of that period mentions a lane running from Bridge St. *versus Fratres Carmelinos*: *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 469.

⁵⁹ *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 177 (accusation about stolen book, 1291); B.L. Harl. MS. 2020, f. 143 (detention of dower, 1310); B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 12v. (claim to a legacy, 1328).

⁶⁰ 3 *Sheaf*, ix, p. 47. The account (B.L. Harl. MS. 3838, ff. 25v.–26) is in the handwriting of John Bale; the Abbot Thomas mentioned was probably Thomas Birchills (1291–1323).

⁶¹ P.R.O., CHES 3/2, no. 4; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 177–8.

⁶² *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 122.

⁶³ Ibid. 115, 308.

⁶⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, vi, p. 67. In the 16th cent. the house was said to have been founded by Thomas Stadham in 1279: B.L. Harl. MS. 539, f. 143v.

⁶⁵ B.L. Harl. MS. 2125, ff. 31v., 45.

⁶⁶ *Lancs and Ches. Wills*, 1.

⁶⁷ *Ch. in Chester*, 96–7.

⁶⁸ 36 D.K.R. 101.

⁶⁹ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 11; B.L. Harl. MS. 2063, f. 62v.; W. Beamont, *Hist. House of Lyme*, 26.

⁷⁰ 3 *Sheaf*, xxxv, p. 54; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 28.

⁷¹ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 147.

of John Bars in 1348.⁷² No generous bequests, however, were received in return for the burial by the Carmelites of the mutilated body of Sir Peter Legh of Lyme, a supporter of Richard II, who was executed by Henry Bolingbroke in 1399.⁷³ In 1439 John Hope requested burial in front of the altar of Our Lady near the graves of his father, mother, and brothers.⁷⁴ In 1508 Roger Smith of Chester asked to be buried in the chapel next to the door to the vestry and left £6 13s. 4d. to be spent on the church or the convent buildings;⁷⁵ nineteen years later Dr. Thomas Sparke requested burial next to his cousin, Roger Smith, and left the residue of his estate to support a priest to celebrate at the high altar.⁷⁶ In 1496 John Hawarden of Chester directed that his body should be buried in the church of the White Friars and left £10 for the tomb and a rent of 6s. 8d. from property in Bridge Street to support an obit.⁷⁷ His widow, Margaret, asked in 1520 to be buried in the tomb which was on the north side of the church and left £3 6s. 8d. and a lead furnace for work on the tomb and repairs to the church.⁷⁸ In 1525 Richard Fletcher, baker, asked to be buried before the image of Our Lady.⁷⁹

From the mid 14th century there appear to have been more Carmelites than Franciscans or Dominicans in Chester. In 1367 the convent numbered fourteen, including a prior, a sub-prior, and a reader.⁸⁰ Nine Chester Carmelites received orders in Coventry and Lichfield diocese during the episcopate of Robert Stretton (1360–85) and 10 during that of Richard le Scrope (1386–98); the latter figure was more than the combined total of Franciscans and Dominicans.⁸¹ There were, however, no ordinations of Chester Carmelites in the diocese between 1397 and 1465, although members of the house were licensed as confessors in 1407 and 1413.⁸² The indication of spiritual decline is confirmed by evidence of the involvement of Carmelites in disorder in Chester in the 15th and early 16th centuries.⁸³ Nevertheless, the house apparently revived in the early 16th century and it was the only Chester friary to put forward candidates for ordination during the episcopate of Geoffrey Blythe (1503–31).⁸⁴ In 1538 it was the largest friary in the city: ten members witnessed the act of surrender and several bore the names of prominent local families. Thirteen members were dispensed from their orders in September.⁸⁵ The last prior, John Hurleston, had studied theology at Oxford and Cologne and was described as ‘a very discreet man’ when he offered to

act as confessor to Piers Feldy at his execution in 1537.⁸⁶

The house was surrendered to Richard Ingworth, bishop of Dover, on 15 August 1538 ‘without any counsel or constraining but very poverty’. An inventory was made and the visitor removed a small chalice before handing the property over to the mayor.⁸⁷ The inventory shows that the house was not as poverty-stricken as that of the Grey Friars and the church was well-equipped with service books, vestments, and altar cloths; there were five altars in the chancel, including Our Lady’s altar, two pairs of organs in the choir, three bells in the steeple, and the contents of the vestry included a purse of relics.⁸⁸ The buildings yielded little lead, apart from some guttering. Debts amounted to only £8 9s., less than those of the two other friaries.⁸⁹ The house owned property outside the precinct which was let out on long leases. It included seven tenements and gardens, an orchard and a barn in St. Martin’s parish, and also the carpenters’ house which may have been within the precincts. In 1539 rents of the conventual buildings and property amounted to £2 7s. 10d. a year and two former friars were listed among the tenants when the property was sold in 1544 to John Cokkes of London.⁹⁰ The site was immediately resold to Fulk Dutton and the buildings were occupied as a dwelling house during the second half of the 16th century; in 1592–3 the site was acquired by Thomas Egerton, the attorney-general, who demolished the church and built a new house.⁹¹

The priory occupied a site between Commonhall Street, Weaver Street, Whitefriars and Bridge Street; Hollar’s map of Chester shows that the church stood directly on Whitefriars.⁹² Apart from the church, buildings mentioned in the 1538 inventory and later documents include the cloister, the convent hall, the dorter, the prior’s chamber and the kitchen, bulting house, salt house, and store house, but there is no evidence as to the position of these buildings and no clearly identified remains of the friary have survived.⁹³

PRIORS

William de Hogetote, occurs 1309, 1310.⁹⁴

William de Luda, occurs 1328.⁹⁵

Richard Pigas, occurs 1348.⁹⁶

Richard Downes, occurs 1367, 1386.⁹⁷

James Hyrleton, occurs 1398.⁹⁸

Richard, occurs 1463.⁹⁹

⁷² 3 *Sheaf*, xxi, p. 52.

⁷³ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 16.

⁷⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, xvii, p. 105.

⁷⁵ J. H. E. Bennett, ‘The Hospital and Chantry of St. Ursula the Virgin of Chester’, J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 100.

⁷⁶ *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, i (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xxxiii), 16, 18.

⁷⁷ 4 *Sheaf*, xxiii, pp. 2–3.

⁷⁸ *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, ii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] li), 7. The justice’s tomb mentioned in the inventory of the choir at the dissolution was possibly that of John Hawarden: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (1), p. 477; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 54.

⁷⁹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, f. 85.

⁸⁰ 3 *Sheaf*, vi, p. 67.

⁸¹ 2nd *Reg. Stretton*, 159–396; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/6, ff. 146–157v.

⁸² Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, ff. 196, 203v.

⁸³ Chester City R.O., MB/2, ff. 2, 43; MB/5, f. 74; MB/7, f. 171v.; MB/8, f. 40v.; J.C.A.S. xxxi (1), 17–19; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14 i, f. 89v.

⁸⁴ B/A/1/14 ii (unfoliated ordination reg., see under 1528, 1529, 1530, 1531).

⁸⁵ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 25–6; *Faculty Off. Regs.*, ed. D. S. Chambers, 164.

⁸⁶ Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford, 1501 to 1540*, 306; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xii (2), p. 221.

⁸⁷ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (1), p. 477; (2), p. 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* xiii (1), p. 477. There is a full transcript of the inventory in J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 44–6.

⁸⁹ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 26.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 27–8; above.

⁹¹ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 29, 34–5, 39. For a full history of the site see *ibid.* 27–40.

⁹² *Ibid.* 41–4.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 41–2, 46–8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 10, 41; B.L. Harl. MS. 2020, f. 143; P.R.O., CHES 29/22, rott. 17, 40.

⁹⁵ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 12v.

⁹⁶ Beamont, *Hist. House of Lyme*, 26.

⁹⁷ 3 *Sheaf*, vi, pp. 67–8; B.L. Harl. MS. 2077, f. 36v.

⁹⁸ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, f. 126.

⁹⁹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, f. 94v.

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John Reyde, occurs 1470-1, 1494-5.¹

George Palmer, occurs between 1498-9 and 1528.²

John Hurleston, occurs 1537, surrendered the friary in 1538.³

The seal of the friary,⁴ 13th century in date, is a pointed oval 1½ by 1¼ in. It shows the Virgin, standing on a carved corbel, the Child on her left arm; on each side is a candle in a candlestick. The legend, lombardic: *SIGILLUM PRIORIS CESTRIE FRATRUM DE CARMELO*.

THE FRIARS OF THE SACK

A COMMUNITY of Friars of Penitence of Jesus Christ,

popularly known as Friars of the Sack, was established at Chester before 1274 when the Council of Lyons condemned the order to gradual extinction.⁵ The Chester community is the most recently identified and still the most obscure of the sixteen foundations of the order in England.⁶ In 1277 Edward I sent the community 5s. for food and at that date it seems to have been larger than that of the Carmelites.⁷ When the next royal donations were made in 1284, the Friars of the Sack received four payments totalling £1 13s. 4d., considerably less than the other three communities of friars.⁸ Only one other benefaction is known: Joan, the widow of Geoffrey de Dutton, bequeathed 4s. to *fratribus indutis saccis*.⁹ Nothing further is known of the community's history and it probably died out before 1300.

HOSPITALS

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. GILES, CHESTER

A LEPER hospital dedicated to St. Giles¹⁰ stood in the township of Boughton beyond the East Gate of Chester.¹¹ The founder is usually said to have been Ranulph III, earl of Chester but the hospital possibly existed before 1181 as 20s. a year was paid to the 'infirm' of Chester during the minority of Ranulph III and that sum was paid in the 14th century to the lepers of Boughton as ancient alms.¹² Ranulph III gave an annual rent charge of 10s. to St. Werburgh's from which the monks were to feed 100 paupers once a year and to give 20d. a year to the lepers of Boughton to commemorate his father.¹³ The inmates of the hospital later claimed that their extensive privileges, which included a toll on all food bought for sale in Chester and a fishing boat on the Dee, were also given by Ranulph III.¹⁴ Three fishing stalls included in the claim of privileges in 1499 were given by Robert the Chamberlain, probably in the 1190s.¹⁵ The hospital also came to possess land and rents in and near Chester

and, although the names of the original benefactors seldom survive, some of the property probably came to the hospital with new inmates: thus land in Eastgate Street was given by the relatives of Yseult, who, 'smitten by the scourge of a visitation from on high', had been admitted to the hospital.¹⁶

When Henry III annexed the earldom of Chester after 1237 he proved a generous patron of the hospital. Between 1237 and 1240 he gave £5 yearly and in 1238-9 and 1240 additional grants of 10 marks towards its maintenance.¹⁷ He also allowed the lepers a tithe of the expenses of the royal household at Chester allegedly in continuation of a grant by the earls of Chester;¹⁸ in 1243 and 1252 he gave them 30 marks and £10 to buy clothes.¹⁹ At least one leper in the house received an individual benefaction: the Crown continued to pay alms of 1d. a day which had been granted to Amice de Costentin in the time of John, earl of Chester, until 1277.²⁰ On his accession Edward I reduced alms to the hospital to the customary payment of 20s. a year and there were few signs of

¹ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 19, 41; B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 184v.

² J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 20; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14 i, f. 89v.; *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, i. 38; ii. 7. In 1531 Palmer was leased a house outside the precinct but he witnessed the deed of surrender: J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxi (1), 25, 27; P.R.O., SC 8/Hen. VIII/7384, m. 82.

³ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xii (2), p. 221; xiii (2), p. 35. He was still in Oxford in 1534: Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford, 1501 to 1540*, 306.

⁴ Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 506.

⁵ For the history of the order see R. W. Emery, 'The Friars of the Sack', *Speculum*, xviii, 323-34.

⁶ Letter from R. W. Emery in *Downside Review*, lxix, 520; D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses, Eng. and Wales* (2nd edn. 1971), 247-9.

⁷ P.R.O., E 101/350/23, m. 2 (on the same date the Carmelites were allowed 3s. 9d. and the Franciscans and Dominicans 13s. 1d. each).

⁸ *Tribute to an Antiquary*, 110-11 (the Dominicans received £8 14s. 1d., the Franciscans £6 17s. 3½d., and the Carmelites £4 12s. 4d.).

⁹ Bodl. MS. Dodsworth 62, f. 43v. (printed 3 *Sheaf*, ix, p. 117). The will is not dated but the benefaction may be early

as the Carmelites are not mentioned.

¹⁰ The patron saint of cripples and lepers: R. M. Clay, *Mediaeval Hospitals of Eng.* 262.

¹¹ It is sometimes confused with Boughton chapel which belonged to the convent of St. Werburgh's and stood in the fork of the Tarvin and Christleton Roads: 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, pp. 55, 59.

¹² Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 352; B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 118; *Ches. in Pipe R.* 6-8, 12, 14, 16, 18; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 5, 23, 40, 103. For the suggestion that the 'infirm' belonged to St. John's Hospital see T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 68-9.

¹³ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, i. pp. 96, 211.

¹⁴ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 352; 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 66.

¹⁵ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 352; Rob. the chamberlain occurs c. 1190-1204: Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* 36.

¹⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, vi, p. 102; 27 D.K.R. 98 (land in Hoole); *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 330 (land in Claverton); B.L. Add. Ch. 50082 (exchange of cellar in Eastgate St.).

¹⁷ *Ches. in Pipe R.* 37, 45, 52, 59.

¹⁸ *Cal. Lib.* 1240-5, 75; *Cal. Pat.* 1232-47, 468.

¹⁹ *Cal. Lib.* 1240-5, 205; 1251-60, 93.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 1240-5, 90; *Ches. in Pipe R.* 71, 78, 113, 118, 123, 129.

royal favour or interest in the 14th century apart from the regular confirmation of the privileges of the hospital and a grant of £3 6s. 8d. by the Black Prince in 1353.²¹ As patron the Crown nominated inmates: in 1390 William le Cryor was created a brother and granted a portion and a decent dwelling in the hospital and in 1401 Henry White, specifically described as a leper, was appointed to a place.²²

The relations of the hospital with the citizens of Chester and the monks of St. Werburgh's were not always happy. Around 1300 the masters were involved in legal disputes concerning detention of rents, tolls or alms, the Dee fishery, and usury.²³ The tolls claimed by the hospital on all victuals bought for sale in Chester were particularly resented by the tenants of St. Werburgh's abbey. In 1353 the right of the proctors of the hospital to demand tolls from the tenants of the abbey was referred to the county court²⁴ and in the following year the abbot objected to the arrest of his tenants for refusing to pay tolls when they had no obligation 'to make any contribution to the hospital'.²⁵ The privilege of collecting the tolls was still being claimed in 1499 and exercised in 1537 when the city authorities pointed out that, whereas the privilege had originally been granted to relieve the sick, the inmates of the hospital were able-bodied; it was ordered that admissions should be confined to the sick of the city of Chester on penalty of loss of the market tolls.²⁶ Little else is known of the history of the hospital in the later Middle Ages apart from some benefactions: David Bars, who was master in the mid 15th century, was said to have received money for the hospital and in 1505 Henry Raynford, rector of Holy Trinity, left 20d. to 'the sele folk at Boughton'.²⁷ By the 16th century the inmates evidently lived in individual houses and kept animals on the land around the hospital. In 1537 they were forbidden to wash food or clothes in the newly built conduit at Boughton and were ordered to prevent their animals damaging the conduit and to see that the pipes were properly covered.²⁸

The hospital escaped dissolution under the Act of 1547, probably because of its charitable activities. In 1553 the master was given custody of two small bells in the chapel, a silver chalice, and a paten weighing four ounces; the communion book and the other goods in the chapel, which were not worth selling, were given to the inmates.²⁹ By the early 17th century

the cottages which made up the hospital seem to have become heritable properties.³⁰ In 1606 the seven inmates, six men and one woman, agreed not to receive vagabonds and beggars into their houses, to ring their swine, and to fence the hospital lands.³¹ In 1629 the right of the brothers and sisters of the hospital to be free of the payment of pannage, pontage and murage was confirmed.³² The hospital and its privileges did not survive the Civil Wars as its position in the suburbs of Chester was vulnerable. On 20 July 1643 the Chester garrison set fire to the hospital barns and pulled down the houses and 'the old chapel of Spital Boughton' with the stone barn next to it.³³ The displaced inmates complained to the mayor that while they were helping to defend the besieged city the soldiers destroyed their houses and plundered their possessions.³⁴ In 1657 the master retrieved one of the chapel bells from the Pentice but it was never re-hung in a new hospital and in 1660 the restored Charles II granted to the mayor and citizens of Chester all the lands of 'the hospital or late hospital of Boughton, otherwise Spittle Boughton'.³⁵ The hospital stood on the southern side of Christleton Road behind West Mount and the site, in a disused graveyard, was marked by an inscription in 1935.³⁶

PRIORS, MASTERS, OR WARDENS

Ralph Bebington, occurs 1295, 1296.³⁷
 Roger, occurs 1298.³⁸
 Randal of Bebington, occurs 1304, 1311-12.³⁹
 Matthew de Northal, occurs 1312-13.⁴⁰
 Robert Vickers, occurs 1443-4.⁴¹
 David Bars, occurs 1452-3.⁴²
 Henry Medwall, occurs 1486.⁴³
 Richard Medwall, or Ardwall, occurs before 1518.⁴⁴
 Bartholomew Tatton, occurs before 1518.⁴⁵
 Peter Mainwaring, appointed 1518, died 1549.⁴⁶
 Hugh Barnston, appointed 1549.⁴⁷
 Ralph Thornewton, occurs 1553.⁴⁸
 Thomas Harpur, occurs 1606.⁴⁹
 Henry Harpur, appointed 1618.⁵⁰

Two seals are known. The first,⁵¹ probably of 12th-century date, is a pointed oval, about 3 by 2½ in., and depicts St. Giles, full-length and lifting his right hand

²¹ *Ches. in Pipe R.* 112; *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 5, 10, 23, 40, 166, 217; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 115, 125; *Cal. Pat.* 1327-30, 399.

²² 36 *D.K.R.* 46.

²³ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, ff. 30, 54, 73-4, 76, 82, 92; Chester City R.O., MR 1/19, m.1; 1/19(b); 3 *Sheaf*, xxxv, p. 71; *Cal. Chester. Co. Ct. R.* 101, 198.

²⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 125-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 146.

²⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 66; B.L. Harl. MS. 2063, f. 58v.

²⁷ *Ch. in Chester*, 95n., 98, 172; B.L. Harl. MS. 2153, f. 165.

²⁸ B.L. Harl. MS. 2063, f. 58v.

²⁹ P.R.O., E 117/1/46, ff. 1, 12.

³⁰ Hist. MSS. Com. 7, 8th Rep. 1, *Chester Corp.*, p. 383.

³¹ Chester City R.O., ML/2/176.

³² B.L. Harl. MS. 2101, f. 39.

³³ *Ibid.* 2125, f. 135. The 'stone barn' was possibly part of the original hospital buildings.

³⁴ Chester City R.O., AF/26/23.

³⁵ 3 *Sheaf*, viii, pp. 41-2; 31st Report of Charity Commissioners, [103], p. 345, H.C. (1837-8), xxiv.

³⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, i, p. 95; xxx, pp. 40, 55. A statue of St. Giles with his dog is said to have been put on the tower of St. John's church and is now in a niche over the south porch: *ibid.* i, p. 95.

³⁷ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 30; *Cal. Chester Co. Ct. R.* 198.

³⁸ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, f. 54.

³⁹ *Ibid.* f. 73; Add. Ch. 50082.

⁴⁰ Chester City R.O., MR 1/19, m.1.

⁴¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 7568, f. 118. ⁴² *Ibid.* 2153, f. 165.

⁴³ B.L. Add. Ch. 72325. He was a notary and sacristan of St. John's church: *Ch. in Chester*, 161.

⁴⁴ 26 *D.K.R.* 25; 39 *D.K.R.* 25. Rich. may be a mistake for Hen.

⁴⁵ 26 *D.K.R.* 25.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; *Cal. Pat.* 1549-55, 21. He was also a canon of St. John's: *Ch. in Chester*, 159.

⁴⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1548-9, 371.

⁴⁸ P.R.O., E 117/1/46, f. 12.

⁴⁹ Chester City R.O., ML/2/176.

⁵⁰ 39 *D.K.R.* 63.

⁵¹ Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* i, p. 452, no. 2687. Nos. 2685-6 are wrongly attributed to the hospital.

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in benediction. The legend, lombardic, is badly damaged: . . . UM CE. . . The second,⁵² in use 1311–12, is a pointed oval, about 2 by 1½ in., depicting a pascal lamb supporting a cross. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM INFIRMORUM DE CESTRIE.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, CHESTER⁵³

THE hospital 'for the sustentation of poor and silly persons' which stood outside the North Gate of Chester was probably founded by Ranulph III, Earl of Chester, in the early 1190s.⁵⁴ He gave the site in free alms and free of all services except the reception and care of the poor and ordered that the brothers of the hospital who travelled through Cheshire preaching and collecting alms should be honourably treated.⁵⁵ The earl's grant was made to the Virgin and All Saints but within a few years the hospital had acquired its dedication to St. John the Baptist and was usually known as the Hospital of St. John without the North Gate.⁵⁶ In the 13th century the hospital community, apart from the poor and the sick, evidently consisted of a prior, brethren, and lay servants living under religious rule.⁵⁷ In 1241 the brethren were given permission to build a chapel beyond the Foregate (probably the North Gate).⁵⁸ The extensive privileges given to the hospital by Ranulph III were a potential cause of conflict and early in its history arrangements were made to protect the interests of the existing churches in Chester. It was agreed between the brethren of the hospital and the abbot of Chester that all servants of the hospital wearing secular clothes, apart from the gardener, the porter (*claviger*), the prior's groom, and the woman who attended the sick, were to pay tithes and offerings to the mother church of St. Werburgh, as were those staying in the hospital and wearing secular clothes; any servants engaging in trade were also to pay tithes and offerings to the mother church. Strangers and travellers, however, were allowed to receive the sacraments and make offerings at the hospital church. A similar agreement concerning burial rights was reached in the early 13th century with the abbot and convent of St. Werburgh's and the dean of St. John's: the brethren of the hospital were allowed to have a graveyard to bury the poor who died there and also men and women in confraternity with the hospital who had worn its habit in good health and

for at least eight days.⁵⁹

Besides granting the site of the hospital and taking it under his special protection Ranulph III agreed to maintain three beds for the poor and infirm at the rate of 1d. a day in alms for each pauper; these alms of £4 11s. a year were continued by the Crown after 1237 and were still paid in the 16th century.⁶⁰ By the early 14th century the hospital had endowments worth £31 4s. 10d. a year.⁶¹ Several early grants of land, including some in Lancashire, were made by those who were among the witnesses of Ranulph III's charter or by members of their families or other friends or officials of the earl.⁶² Members of the leading families of Chester in the 13th century also made gifts to the hospital, notably Ralph Saracen who gave a salt-house in Nantwich and land in Allerton (Lancs.) which he held of Cockersand Abbey.⁶³ In addition, the hospital had acquired by 1316 property in Chester worth £13 13s. 10d. a year in rents.⁶⁴ Much of the property outside Chester was alienated in return for small rent charges, doubtless for reasons of convenience; an inquiry in 1316 found that the improvident policy had been carried out by successive priors in the later 13th century.⁶⁵ In 1311 the master, William de Bache, was said to have so impoverished the hospital as to impair its work of mercy and hospitality and was removed from office.⁶⁶ A succession of inquisitions held between 1311 and 1341 reveals that the constitution of the hospital had undergone a transformation similar to that of other hospitals at the period and it was controlled by a master rather than a prior and chapter of brethren. Three chaplains celebrated there daily: two in the church and one in the hospital before the feeble and infirm inmates.⁶⁷ The hospital was to take in as many poor and sick as possible but thirteen beds were to be kept ready for the poor and feeble of the city; each inmate was to receive daily a loaf of bread, a dish of pottage, half a gallon of ale, and a piece of meat or fish.⁶⁸

In 1316 twelve jurors from the city and twelve from the county approved the transfer of the hospital to the guardianship of Birkenhead priory, an institution impoverished by the cost of providing hospitality to travellers. The move, which had been planned five years previously, proved to be beneficial to neither institution. The priory took over the responsibility of maintaining the services and almsgiving of the hospital on inadequate and diminished resources.⁶⁹ There were further alienations of hospital property by the priors of

⁵² B.L. Add. Ch. 50082; 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 40.

⁵³ For a full hist. of the hospital see R. Stewart-Brown, 'Hosp. of St. John at Chester', *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 66–106.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 68; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 27. For the suggestion that it was an earlier foundation see *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 68; payments in the 1180s to the 'infirm' of Chester may, however, refer to St. Giles's Hospital: above, hospital of St. Giles. Ranulph III was regarded as the founder in the mid 14th cent.: B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, f. 98v.

⁵⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1281–92, 55; *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 66–7.

⁵⁶ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, p. 299. ⁵⁷ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* x. 21.

⁵⁸ *Close R.* 1237–42, 329; 3 *Sheaf*, xix, pp. 40–1; *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 70–1.

⁵⁹ *Cart. Chester Abbey*, ii, pp. 299–300.

⁶⁰ *Cal. Lib.* 1226–40, 405, 451; 1240–5, 49; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 204.

⁶¹ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 94.

⁶² Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 27–8; *V.C.H. Lancs.* iii. 122, 151, 350, 403; *Lancs. Inquests, Extents and Feudal*

Aids (R.S.L.C. xlvi), 18, 26, 49; *Cockersand Chart.* iv. (Chetham Soc. N.S. xliii), 561–2, 667–8, 673; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* ii, p. 72. The names of the mid-13th cent. priors (below) suggest a strong Lancs. connexion at that period.

⁶³ *Cockersand Chart.* iv. 561–2; Bodl. MS. Dodsworth 31, f. 144; *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 100; Barraclough, *Early Ches. Charts.* 28.

⁶⁴ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 94, 99–100; 27 *D.K.R.* 100–1; 3 *Sheaf*, xx, p. 14; xxxv, p. 33; H. Taylor, 'Notes upon some early deeds relating to Chester and Flint', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* ii. 160.

⁶⁵ *Cal. Inq. Misc.* ii, p. 72; P.R.O., CHES 29/29, rot. 28d.; *V.C.H. Lancs.* iii. 350; 3 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 1–2; *Whalley Coucher Bk.* ii. (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xi), 578–9.

⁶⁶ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 72; *Cal. Pat.* 1307–13, 321.

⁶⁷ 27 *D.K.R.* 100–1; *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 72.

⁶⁸ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 72–4; 27 *D.K.R.* 100–1; B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, ff. 98–99v.

⁶⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1313–17, 476; P.R.O., CHES 29/29, rot. 28d.; *T.H.S.L.C.* lxxvii. 72–3; above, Birkenhead priory.

Birkenhead and the annual revenues of the hospital declined from £31 4s. 10d. in 1316 to £27 3s. 10d. in 1341.⁷⁰ In June 1341 the Black Prince took the hospital with its estates into his own hands because certain duties were not being carried out and an inquiry was ordered into its government.⁷¹ Before the inquiry was held the custody of the hospital, which was reported to be 'burdened with heavy charges and suffering from misrule', was given to a royal clerk.⁷² The inquiry found that the church, chapel, and hospital buildings were not adequately roofed and that two large houses had collapsed from age and lack of repair.⁷³ In the following year some attempt was made to restore the fortunes of the hospital: a grant of £6 13s. 4d. was made from the profits of the trailbaston sessions of 1353 and in the same year two oaks were delivered from Delamere Forest to repair the hospital buildings.⁷⁴ In 1365 an investigation was ordered into the lands and rents of the hospital in case any were being concealed.⁷⁵ Individual masters were also generous at this period. John Brunham, a clerk of the Black Prince and chamberlain of Chester, planned in 1365 to endow a chantry in the hospital for himself and his family, the king and the queen and all the benefactors of the hospital; he also intended to endow a chaplain to serve in the hospital chapel and a servant to tend the sick.⁷⁶ He had evidently been granted a licence to acquire lands in mortmain worth £10 a year, but did not take it up. It is not known whether the plans were carried out but after Brunham's death in 1379 his executor handed over lands worth £7 19s. 2d. to the new master to maintain a chaplain to celebrate daily for the benefit of the king.⁷⁷ Brunham's successor, also a clerk in royal service, left £20 in his will to the hospital and the sisters there.⁷⁸ By the end of the 14th century, however, the hospital was in difficulties again and in June 1400 Henry, prince of Wales, took it and its lands into his own hands. A visitation was ordered but it is not known whether the commissioners, who included the chamberlain of North Wales, the mayor of Chester, and a royal justice, carried out their investigation; the master, who had been suspended, was reappointed in November 1400.⁷⁹

In the later Middle Ages most of the masters must have been non-resident with livings and official duties elsewhere and it became the practice of such masters to appoint chaplains to administer the hospital for them. In 1396 Thomas Marton appointed Richard Lee to the offices of chief priest in the hospital church and chief administrator in the hospital for life with a salary of eight marks from the revenues of the hospital and a chamber between the hall and the barns of the hospital.⁸⁰ A similar grant was made by Robert Rothbury to Thomas Grene in 1414: Grene was to have a chamber standing at the end of the church and a part of the garden for sowing seeds.⁸¹ In 1414 Henry V confirmed the privileges of the hospital and its tenants and

specified those privileges as freedom from jury service and suit of court in the city and county and freedom from local tolls and taxation; the hospital was also entitled to collect amercements levied on its own men and tenants in any court.⁸² All those privileges were claimed by the master in the 1499 *quo warranto* inquiries with an additional claim to a fishing boat in the Dee.⁸³ Nevertheless, the hospital remained impoverished and was exempted from taxation in the later 15th century.⁸⁴ It continued to receive occasional small gifts and legacies of money and it was doubtless to attract those that it was claimed in 1493 that the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield had given 40 days of indulgence to benefactors since its foundation. It was also said, by a messenger exhibiting a new indulgence, that four masses were said daily in the hospital church, two for living and two for dead benefactors, and in addition prayers were asked each Sunday in 18,000 churches and chapels for the members of the hospital's confraternity. At this time twelve poor and sick men and women were housed in the hospital.⁸⁵ There were complaints from the city authorities in the 1520s that, in the absence of the master, the hospital's constitution was not being properly observed and, in particular, 'foreign people' were being given places. The master pointed out that the revenues of the hospital could not maintain the full establishment of three chaplains and thirteen almspeople and that the hospital was not intended at its foundation to be exclusively for the citizens of Chester, although, as he himself had been brought up in Chester, he would be glad to give them preference.⁸⁶ In 1535 the establishment consisted of a non-resident master or 'prior', a chaplain celebrating daily for the souls of the king and his ancestors for an annual salary of £4 14s. 4d., supplemented by a fee of £1 6s. 8d. for acting as a receiver, and six *consores*, the widows of St. John's, who received 1d. a day. The revenues of the hospital totalled £28 10s. 4d. and consisted of £5 os. 4d. in tithes from the church of Aston-in-Hopedale, £4 11s. in royal alms and £18 19s. in rents from property in the city of Chester, Hulme-house (in Great Boughton), Barton, Edge, Pensby, Blacon, and Nantwich, and in Allerton (Lancs.). By then much of the property had been let on long leases.⁸⁷

The rôle of the hospital in housing the infirm poor of the city of Chester doubtless saved it from dissolution under the Act of 1547. The commissioners who visited Chester in May 1553 to list church goods found nothing worth selling in the hospital and distributed the copes and ornaments to the poor, apart from a silver-gilt chalice, four table-cloths, the service books and a bell in the steeple which were entrusted to the safe-keeping of the chaplain.⁸⁸ In the latter half of the 16th century many of the hospital's lands were leased out for very long periods by a succession of unscrupulous masters and in 1601 a commission was appointed

⁷⁰ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 94; B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, f. 99; 3 *Sheaf*, xxvi, p. 68.

⁷¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, f. 98.

⁷² *Cal. Pat.* 1340-3, 299.

⁷³ B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, f. 99v.

⁷⁴ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 98, 115.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 478.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 486-7.

⁷⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1377-81, 406.

⁷⁸ 3 *Sheaf*, xviii, p. 103.

⁷⁹ 36 D.K.R. 101, 239; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 74-5, 104.

⁸⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1396-9, 286.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 1413-16, 256.

⁸² B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, f. 100v.

⁸³ 3 *Sheaf*, xxx, p. 63; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 75-6.

⁸⁴ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/11, f. 48, B/A/1/12, ff. 129, 135; B/A/1/13, f. 194v.; *Ch. in Chester*, 76.

⁸⁵ *Ch. in Chester*, 98n.; P.R.O., CHES 38/26/5; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 93-4, 101-2.

⁸⁶ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 96-7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 96, 97; *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 204; B.L. Harl. MSS. 2063, f. 41v.; 2099, f. 42v.; *Ch. in Chester*, 61, 87; 3 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 88-9.

⁸⁸ P.R.O., E 117/1/47 ff. 1, 13.

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to visit and reform the hospital.⁸⁹ The commissioners found that the master, Richard Young, had not visited the hospital for over three years as he had been imprisoned for debt in Chester castle; nor could he produce his letters of appointment and it was suspected that he had pawned them. He and his wife had taken bribes to admit alms-women and he had accepted payments to make long leases of hospital property at low rents. He was also accused by the hospital chaplain of removing the silver chalice used in the church and chapel as a communion cup. Young was immediately removed from the office of master.⁹⁰ A description survives of the constitution of the hospital a few years after the incident. Prayers were read daily in the chapel by a chaplain paid by the master and the revenues of the hospital were collected by a bailiff who was in charge of repairs to the chapel and to the hospital building which was shared by six poor widows. Each widow had a bedroom, a small chamber, and a garden as well as an annual stipend.⁹¹ The chaplain was allowed a room and a garden and an annual stipend of £5.⁹² In February 1644 all the stone buildings of the hospital and the surrounding wall were demolished to prevent them giving cover during the siege of Chester.⁹³ No trace is left of the original hospital church or other buildings and nothing is known of their appearance.

In June 1658 Oliver Cromwell granted the site and the lands of the hospital and the office of keeper or warden to the corporation; the mayor was to act as warden and use the revenues to relieve the poor and rebuild the hospital.⁹⁴ At the Restoration the corporation petitioned the Crown for the continuation of that arrangement to relieve the increasingly numerous poor in the city but the wardenship was granted for life to Colonel Roger Whitley who is said to have rebuilt the hospital.⁹⁵ In the charter of 1685 the corporation secured the reversion of the wardenship with all the hospital lands but, although Whitley died in 1697, the corporation did not obtain the hospital seal and records until 1703.⁹⁶ In 1717 new buildings were erected on the site: a chapel and charity school facing Northgate Street and, at the back, six single-storeyed almshouses. The almswomen, or 'chapel-yard widows',⁹⁷ were supported from the revenues of the hospital lands but the bulk of the considerable income of the hospital was diverted by the corporation for

other purposes. In 1835 it appeared that the corporation had grossly mismanaged the property: only £85 of the annual income of £600 was applied to the purposes of the hospital, which included the repair of the buildings, the stipend of a chaplain, and small allowances to the inmates. An action alleging misappropriation of funds was brought against the corporation in Chancery and in 1836 the Lord Chancellor ordered the appointment of a body of independent trustees to administer the hospital estates, a move which the corporation strenuously opposed until 1848.⁹⁸ The almshouses have since been administered by trustees under successive schemes of management. A scheme of 1892, still in operation in 1926, provided for the support in the almshouses, with the assistance of a chaplain and a beadle, of thirteen poor of either sex and over 50 years of age who had been reduced by misfortune from better circumstances; the numbers and qualifications were thus similar to those found in the 14th century.

PRIORS, WARDENS, MASTERS OR KEEPERS

- Roger, occurs about 1200.⁹⁹
- Thomas of Pontefract, occurs 1239-40.¹
- Ralph of Smithdown, occurs 1245-6.²
- Roger of Garston, occurs about 1255-6 and 1258-9.³
- Hugh of Aston, occurs about 1285-6 and 1295-6.⁴
- William, occurs 1304, 1306.⁵
- William de Bache, appointed 1309, dismissed 1311.⁶
- Thomas of Burton, appointed 1311, dismissed 1316.⁷
- The prior and convent of Birkenhead, 1316 to 1341.⁸
- Richard of Wilton, or Wolveston, appointed 1341, occurs 1345.⁹
- John Brunham the younger, occurs 1349-50, dead by 1379.¹⁰
- William Walsham, occurs 1379, dead by 1389.¹¹
- Thomas Marton, appointed 1389.¹²
- John Maidenhigh, appointed 1390.¹³
- William Ashton, appointed 1391.¹⁴
- William Hebden, appointed 1393.¹⁵
- Thomas Marton, re-appointed 1394, resigned 1398.¹⁶
- Robert Rothbury, appointed 1398, suspended and reappointed 1400, occurs 1414.¹⁷

⁸⁹ 1 *Sheaf*, p. 130; B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, ff. 55v.-56; P.R.O., CHES 38/28/4.

⁹⁰ P.R.O., CHES 38/28/4; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 79-81; 3 *Sheaf*, xxi, p. 48; 39 D.K.R. 62.

⁹¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 1989, f. 74v.

⁹² Ibid. 2063, f. 41v.

⁹³ Ibid. 2125, f. 148.

⁹⁴ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 82.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 82-3; *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1660-1, 391; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 181; 3 *Sheaf*, xxxv, p. 21.

⁹⁶ This account of the subsequent history of the hospital and almshouses is based on T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 83-92 and 31st Rep. Com. Char., 1837-8, xxiv, pp. 344-54.

⁹⁷ In 1799-80 Joseph Crewe, alderman of Chester, left £600 in trust to pay £30 a year to the 6 'chapel-yard' widows of St. John's hospital: T.H.S.L.C. xxvii 102.

⁹⁸ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 90.

⁹⁹ J.C.A.S. N.S. x. 21; *Whalley Coucher Bk.* ii. 578-9; iii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xvi), 828-9 (where another witness is Rob., prior of Birkenhead: above, Birkenhead priory).

¹ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 102; 3 *Sheaf*, i. pp. 1-2.

² T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 102.

³ Ibid. Adam, lord of Garston (d. 1265) was a benefactor

of the hospital: V.C.H. Lancs. iii. 122.

⁴ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 102; J.C.A.S. N.S. ii. 160.

⁵ B.L. Harl. MS. 2162, ff. 71v., 81v.

⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1307-13, 187, 321.

⁷ Ibid. 321; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 73, 103.

⁸ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 103; above, Birkenhead priory.

⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1340-3, 299; 36 D.K.R. 338; P.R.O., CHES 29/56, rot. 18. He was a royal clerk.

¹⁰ *Ches. Chamb. Accts.* 129, 165-6, 170; *Cal. Pat.* 1377-81, 406.

¹¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1377-81, 406. He was appointed to the office for life in 1387: *ibid.* 1385-9, 253. See also T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 103.

¹² *Cal. Pat.* 1389-92, 117; below.

¹³ *Cal. Pat.* 1389-92, 279.

¹⁴ Ibid. 410.

¹⁵ Ibid. 1392-6, 270. The earlier grant (*ibid.* 244) to 'John' Hebden was probably in error: T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 103.

¹⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1392-6, 368; 1396-9, 424. See above for his earlier tenure.

¹⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1396-9, 424; 1413-16, 256; 36 D.K.R. 101, 412; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 104.

John Thornton, appointed 1426, occurs 1448.¹⁸

John Massey, appointed 1449, occurs 1470.¹⁹

William Thomas, appointed 1476.²⁰

John Tesedale, appointed 1484.²¹

Thomas Crewe, appointed 1485, occurs 1523.²²

Robert Johns, occurs 1535.²³

Walter Buckler, appointed 1540.²⁴

Richard Lyell, D.C.L., occurs 1553, died 1556.²⁵

Thomas Haward, M.A., appointed 1556, resigned 1559.²⁶

Thomas Huicke, LL.D., appointed 1559, resigned 1562.²⁷

William Hayworth, appointed 1562, resigned 1564.²⁸

David Phillips, appointed 1564, occurs 1566.²⁹

Richard Young, appointed 1571, dismissed 1601.³⁰

Peter Sharpe, B.A., B.D., appointed 1601, died 1616.³¹

George and William Hope, appointed 1616.³²

The mayor and corporation of Chester, appointed 1658.³³

Colonel Roger Whitley, appointed 1660, died 1697.³⁴

The mayor and corporation of Chester, from 1697 to 1836.³⁵

A seal in use from the early 13th century³⁶ is a pointed oval depicting the standing figure of St. John the Baptist in a hair-skin cloak; he holds in his left hand a scourge of thistles and in his right a roundel containing the lamb and cross. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM SANCTI IOHANNIS HOPITALIS CESTRIE.

The trustees of the charity possess the matrix, dated 1730,³⁷ of another seal. It is a pointed oval $3\frac{3}{4}$ by $2\frac{3}{8}$ in. and depicts St. John the Baptist standing on a platform with radiant nimbus and hair-shirt; he holds a roundel containing the lamb and cross in his left hand and points to it with his right. On each side of the figure is a kneeling angel holding up a thistle and in the base, under a trefoiled arch, is a tonsured half-figure in prayer. Legend, lombardic: SIGILLUM HOSPITALIS SANCTI IOHANNIS BAPTISTE CESTRIE.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. URSULA, CHESTER³⁸

THE short-lived hospital of St. Ursula originated indirectly with the will of Roger Smith in 1508. Smith, one of the sheriffs of Chester in 1499, wished his house in Commonhall Lane to be converted after his death into almshouses for the use of such members of the Twenty-Four [aldermen] 'as ben fallen into decay and necessitie'; if there were insufficient candidates among them, vacant houses were to be offered to the Forty-Eight [Common Councilmen].³⁹ Smith left the residue of his estate to maintain his almsmen and requested that the mayor and aldermen should free the houses from all chief rents and pay for repairs in return for the right to nominate the inmates.⁴⁰ The executors of Smith's will, including his brother Thomas, to whom Roger Smith entrusted the realisation of his project, were responsible for transforming the original plan over the next two years. By a tripartite indenture of 6 February 1508/9 between the executors, the mayor, aldermen and commonalty, and the prioress and convent of St. Mary's it was agreed that the executors would pay for the building of six almshouses under one roof on a site in Commonhall Lane supplied by the corporation. The mayor was to have the nomination to vacant places from the Twenty-Four and the Forty or, failing suitable 'decayed' candidates, from the poorest of the inhabitants of Chester; widows were also to be eligible, provided they did not remarry and were 'of good disposition'. If the mayor did not nominate within a year and twelve days the prioress and convent were to fill vacancies and if they did not act within six months the right of nomination was to rest with the mercers' company. Upon election the almsmen and almswomen were to swear to say daily 'Our Lady Psalter with *De Profundis*' for the soul of Roger Smith but few other details are given about the management of the almshouses.⁴¹

The residue of Roger Smith's estate provided an annual income of only £8 for his almshouses⁴² and fears of the consequences of under-endowment may

¹⁸ 37 D.K.R. 133, 709; *Cockersand Chart.* vi (Chetham Soc. N.S. lvii), 1103; V.C.H. *Lancs.* iii. 126n. He was appointed for life in 1439. See also T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 104.

¹⁹ 37 D.K.R. 137-8; B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, f. 42v.

²⁰ 37 D.K.R. 141; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 105.

²¹ B.L. Harl. MS. 433, f. 104v.

²² 37 D.K.R. 142; *Materials Illustrative of Reign of Hen. VII* (Rolls Ser.), i. 32; 3 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 88-9; V.C.H. *Lancs.* iii. 131n. He was described in letters of appointment as 'scholar of Oxford'.

²³ *Valor Eccl.* v. 204. See also B.L. Harl. MS. 2159, ff. 99v.-100.

²⁴ L. & P. Hen. VIII, xvi, p. 142; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 105.

²⁵ *Lancs. and Ches. Rec. in P.R.O.* ii (R.S.L.C. viii), 397; *Cal. Pat.* 1555-7, 504.

²⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1555-7, 504; 1558-60, 126.

²⁷ Ibid. 1558-60, 126; 1560-3, 604.

²⁸ Ibid. 1560-3, 604; 1563-6, p. 147.

²⁹ Ibid. 1563-6, p. 147; B.L. Harl. MS. 2099, f. 56. He had been appointed bailiff and receiver in 1563; B.L. Harl. MS. 2057, f. 162.

³⁰ *Cal. Pat.* 1569-72, p. 187; 39 D.K.R. 62.

³¹ 39 D.K.R. 62; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 105. The reversion of the office was granted to Thos. Corbin in 1615 but was probably never effective: T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 105.

³² *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1611-18, 363. In Mar. 1616 Geo. Hope was granted the office on surrender by Peter Sharpe, with reversion to Wm. Hope on surrender of Thos. Corbin (ibid. 353); Thos. Mainwaring was granted the reversion of the office in 1631 (*Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1629-31, 553) but Geo. Hope probably held office until his death before 1658: T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 106.

³³ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 106; above.

³⁴ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1659-60, 427; 1660-1, 72. The mayor and corporation of Chester were granted the reversion of the office in 1685: T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 106.

³⁵ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 106; above.

³⁶ Barraclough, *Early Ches. Chats.* facing p. 26, 27; T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. facing p. 92.

³⁷ T.H.S.L.C. lxxvii. 92-3; Birch, *Cat. of Seals in B.M.* ii. 505 (Nos. 2920-1 are wrongly attributed to the hospital).

³⁸ For a full account of the hospital and its site see J. H. E. Bennett, 'Hosp. and Chantry of St. Ursula the Virgin of Chester', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxxii (2), 98-126.

³⁹ The Forty-Eight mentioned in the will (ibid. 100) became the 40 common councilmen established in 1506: Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 327.

⁴⁰ *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxxii (2), 100.

⁴¹ Chester City R.O., CHB/2, ff. 110-11.

⁴² *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxxii (2), 113.

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have prompted another change of plan. In June 1510 the executors obtained a royal licence to found a chantry and hospital in honour of St. Ursula and her companions. That is the first mention of the new foundation's unusual dedication, which perhaps arose from Roger Smith's possible connexion with the Low Countries or from Thomas Smith's daughter being called Ursula.⁴³ The almshouses, now a hospital, were to be supported by a fraternity of St. Ursula which was licensed to acquire land worth 40 marks a year in order to maintain the poor and infirm of the hospital, repair the buildings, and support services in the hospital chapel.⁴⁴ The former Common Hall or Mote Hall of the city which lay behind the almshouses was adapted as a chapel for the hospital and fraternity.⁴⁵ In 1511 Thomas Runcorn was unaware of the changed status of the foundation for he left money for an almsman in Roger Smith's almshouse;⁴⁶ in 1521, however, Margaret Hawarden left 40d. to the poor men and women of St. Ursula and also 6s 8d. and some bedding to James Richardson, the chantry priest of the hospital.⁴⁷ In 1539 Thomas Baxter, rector of St. Peter's, left £6 13s. 4d. to the hospital and 16d. to each inmate; he also left clothes and hangings for the chapel, a fur-lined gown to James Richardson, and the residue of his goods to support an almsman.⁴⁸ Apart from those benefactions, which seem to have been due to the influence of Thomas Smith and James Richardson, the hospital received no further endowments. Nor is much known of the activities of the fraternity. In 1534 it was leasing a yard in Cow Lane and in 1541 the wardens bound themselves to distribute 30d. among the inmates each year on Maundy Thursday.⁴⁹

The fraternity does not appear to have become popular with the citizens of Chester and it may have lapsed before July 1547 when the chapel, under the name of the Old Common Hall, was sold by the mayor to Ralph Goodman for £8.⁵⁰ The fraternity formally ceased to exist after the Act of the same year which dissolved chantries, fraternities, and hospitals. The hospital, however, continued as an institution for relieving the poor under the name of Sir Thomas Smith's almshouses.⁵¹ The complicated rights of nomination evidently caused some confusion in the early 17th century when Peter Drinkwater, mayor in 1624–5, cited the indenture of 1508 when his right to nominate an almsman was challenged by the third Sir Thomas Smith.⁵² In 1702 the heirs of Sir Thomas Smith, Bt., handed the almshouses over to a group of trustees which included eight aldermen of the city and, to ensure the continuance of the charity, paid £180 to the mayor to purchase a rent-charge of £9 10s.; that sum covered the original endowment of £8 a year and

£1 10s. to meet the cost of repairs. When the arrangement was made the corporation reserved the right to visit the houses and remove any of the inmates.⁵³ The scanty endowment was just sufficient to ensure the continued existence of the almshouses and in the early 19th century the Charity Commissioners reported that they consisted of six separate apartments tenanted by the widows of freemen. When in 1837 the administration of the almshouses was transferred to the trustees of the Chester Municipal Charities it was admitted that the buildings were in a state of ruin and the houses eventually became so dilapidated that the trustees were unable to fill vacancies. In 1870 the trustees applied to the Charity Commissioners for permission to sell the buildings and use the proceeds for the benefit of the poor of the city. The almshouses were sold by auction in October 1871. The ruinous buildings were replaced by a row of red-brick cottages which have since been demolished.⁵⁴

CHAPLAIN

James Richardson, occurs 1521, 1536.⁵⁵

There is a sketch of the oval seal of the fraternity on a copy of a document of 1541⁵⁶ which shows the crowned figure of St. Ursula on a corbel holding a palm in her right hand and an arrow in her left hand; the saint is surrounded by kneeling figures of attendant virgins. The damaged legend reads: SIGILLUM CON. . . URSULE DE CESTER.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. ANDREW, DENHALL

IN THE early 1230s Alexander Stavensby, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, built a hospital at Denhall on the marshes of the Dee estuary to help the poor and the shipwrecked and annexed to it the neighbouring church of Burton in Wirral which had been *ab antiquo* a prebend of Lichfield cathedral. The dean and chapter of Lichfield, who were given Tarvin church as a prebend in compensation, confirmed the annexation and Stavensby's appropriation of Burton church to his new hospital in 1238. Gregory IX again confirmed the appropriation in 1241.⁵⁷ The hospital, which was dedicated to St. Andrew,⁵⁸ was known in the 13th century as a secular priory. In 1251 the pope confirmed the liberties and privileges of the prior and brethren but the community was evidently mixed at that period as the prior made a land grant in Burton

⁴³ P.R.O., CHES 2/179, rot. 5; J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 126–7; *Lancs. and Ches. Wills & Inventories*, ii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] li), 46.

⁴⁴ P.R.O., CHES 2/179, rot. 5.

⁴⁵ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 119–20. For a sketch of the figures of Roger Smith and Thomas Smith and his wife which were in the windows of the former chapel in 1663 see B.L. Harl. MS. 2151, f. 143v.

⁴⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, xv, p. 23.

⁴⁷ *Lancs. and Ches. Wills & Inventories*, ii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] li), 10, 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid. iii (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] liv), 45–6.

⁴⁹ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 107–9; Chester City R.O., CHB/2, f. 111.

⁵⁰ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 123.

⁵¹ Ibid. 110–11.

⁵² B.L. Harl. MS. 2020, f. 77v.

⁵³ J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 113–16.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 11–18. For a view of the almshouses in 1849 see *ibid.*, facing p. 99.

⁵⁵ Above.

⁵⁶ B.L. Harl. MS. 2020, f. 77. The sketch is reproduced in J.C.A.S. N.S. xxxii (2), 109.

⁵⁷ *Magnum Registrum Album* (Collns. Hist. Staffs. 1924), pp. 342–3; V.C.H. Staffs. iii, 143; 2nd Reg. Stretton, 132. There is no evidence to support the suggestion (3 *Sheaf*, xxxiii, p. 43) that the hospital was a pre-Conquest foundation.

⁵⁸ The dedication is unusual, even for a hospital of the type: R. M. Clay, *Mediaeval Hospitals of Eng.* 4–6, 255.

'by the wish and consent of the brethren and sisters there serving God'.⁵⁹ That is the only surviving reference to women living in the hospital and after it there are no further indications, apart from the name of priory, that in its early days the inmates lived under a religious rule.

On the appointment of a new warden in 1320 Bishop Walter Langton reiterated the 'traditional' constitution of the hospital: the new warden was to associate with himself two resident priests and all three were to wear the customary decent dress with a cross and were to celebrate masses and other services regularly. The warden was to act as hospitaller in admitting poor men, travellers arriving from Ireland, and others.⁶⁰ Even in the early days of the hospital the wardens were unlikely, however, to have resided permanently at Denhall. In the 1260s the prior was appointed one of the deputies of the bishop's official and also acted as the warden of the nuns of Chester.⁶¹ From c. 1300 the wardenship or mastership of the hospital, which was valued at £10 a year, was usually held in plurality by secular clerks and several of the masters were prebendaries of Lichfield cathedral or of St. John's, Chester.⁶² In the mid 15th century the compatibility of the two benefices of the mastership of the hospital and the rectorship of Burton was questioned but the bishop ruled in 1447 that both could be held by a secular clerk and in 1452 papal dispensation was obtained for the combination of the offices.⁶³

Apart from the names of the masters little is known of the history of the hospital in the later Middle Ages. William de Newhagh who resigned the mastership in 1400 on the grounds of age and ill-health was said to have improved the buildings and increased the income of the poor inmates; he was granted an annual pension of 10 marks from the revenues.⁶⁴ In 1499, after the hospital had ceased to have an independent existence, extensive privileges were claimed by the master on behalf of the inmates which may have dated from the foundation. Among them were free fishing in the Dee within the hospital bounds, the right of wreck, and free warren of rabbits on the lands of the hospital. No boats were to anchor there without the master's permission and tolls were claimed on merchandise landed there for transport to Chester by land or sea. The masters had the right to make voyages in the small boat belonging to the hospital carrying corn and other necessities without licence and to buy victuals in

Chester free of toll. Sheriffs and other officials could not enter the lands or waters of the hospital to exercise their offices and the master claimed to be under the special protection of the earl of Chester.⁶⁵ There is no record of further endowments after Stavensby's grant of the church of Burton though the hospital held property in St. John's Lane, Chester in the later 14th century.⁶⁶

In January 1496 the hospital was united by the bishop with St. John's Hospital, Lichfield on the grounds that it was too impoverished to continue independently.⁶⁷ It is possible that some connexion with Cheshire was maintained after the union of the two hospitals as one of the almsmen in 1539 bore the Cheshire surname of Capenhurst.⁶⁸ The site of the Denhall hospital, which came to form the most valuable estate of St. John's Hospital, was leased after the union to Sir Thomas Smith of Hough and the buildings seem then to have been used as the parsonage house of Burton church.⁶⁹ In the 17th century the masters of St. John's tended to treat the former hospital as their personal property and in 1675 Francis Ashenhurst settled the site of the Denhall hospital and the glebe and tithes of Burton on his future wife.⁷⁰ It remained in the hands of the Ashenhurst family and in 1738 part of the hospital buildings were demolished with the permission of the bishop and the master of St. John's and a new parsonage house built in a less remote position. In 1751 the remains of the hospital buildings, then in a ruinous state, were demolished, apart from one outlying building which had been converted into a barn.⁷¹ Some remains were still visible in 1897 and stone from the buildings was used in the wall skirting the field in which the hospital had stood.⁷²

PRIORS, MASTERS, OR WARDENS

William, occurs about 1268-9.⁷³

Auynger, occurs before 1293.⁷⁴

Thomas of Denton, occurs 1293.⁷⁵

Simon de Schirele, collated 1302, occurs 1310.⁷⁶

William de Steping, occurs 1318.⁷⁷

William de Chaveley, collated 1320.⁷⁸

Nicholas de Hethe, occurs 1343-9, resigned by 1352.⁷⁹

John de Charnes, or Charnele, provided 1352, died 1374.⁸⁰

⁵⁹ 2nd Reg. Stretton, 132; 3 Sheaf, xvii, p. 88; Cal. Papal Reg. ii. 70.

⁶⁰ Mag. Reg. Alb., pp. 306-7.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 341; J.C.A.S. n.s. xiii. 102-3. The suggestion (3 Sheaf, xvii, p. 88) that the prior could have been a layman in the 13th cent. is unlikely.

⁶² Tax. Eccl. 248; below.

⁶³ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/10, f. 56; Cal. Papal Reg. x. 128-9.

⁶⁴ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, ff. 166v.-167.

⁶⁵ Ormerod, Hist. Ches. ii. 542; 3 Sheaf, xxx, p. 63.

⁶⁶ 3 Sheaf, xxxv, p. 16.

⁶⁷ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/13, f. 185; V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 281. Rob. Frost, master of St. John's Hospital, Lich. claimed privileges in 1499 as master or warden of the priory or hospital of St. Andrew, Denhall: 3 Sheaf, xxx, p. 63.

⁶⁸ P.R.O., STAC 2/34/143. When St. Leonard's Hospital, Freeford was united with St. John's at the same date the prebendary of Freeford was given nomination of one of the 13 almsmen: V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 281.

⁶⁹ V.C.H. Staffs. iii. 282, 284; 3 Sheaf, xxii, p. 87; Star Chamber Proc. (R.S.L.C. lxxi), 117. In 1535 it was valued at

£13 6s. 8d.: Valor Eccl. (Rec. Com.), iii. 141-2.

⁷⁰ Staffs. R.O., D. 787/2.

⁷¹ Wm. Salt Libr., Stafford, H.M. 42/8/7; H.M. Uncatalogued, box 45, 8(f.).

⁷² Hilda Gamlin, Twixt Mersey and Dee (Liverpool, 1897), 234-5.

⁷³ J.C.A.S. n.s. xiii. 102-3. Possibly also in 1265: Mag. Reg. Alb., p. 341.

⁷⁴ 3 Sheaf, xvii, p. 88.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/1, f. 24; Cal. Papal Reg. ii. 70.

⁷⁷ Cal. Papal Reg. ii. 172, 177. He also held benefices in Lincoln diocese.

⁷⁸ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/1, f. 87v.; Mag. Reg. Alb., pp. 306-7.

⁷⁹ Cal. Papal Reg. iii. 128, 184, 293, 319, 484. He held a prebend in St. Paul's Lond. and was rector of Hodnet (Salop.): Cal. Papal Reg. i. 68, 142.

⁸⁰ Cal. Papal Reg. iii. 484; 1st Reg. Stretton, 178. He also held the prebend of Colwich: Le Neve, Fasti, 1300-1541, Cov. & Lich. 25.

A HISTORY OF CHESHIRE

William de Newhagh, collated 1375, resigned 1400.⁸¹

John Luggor, or Loghere, collated 1400.⁸²

William Piers, resigned 1404.⁸³

William de Newhagh, collated 1404.⁸⁴

Robert Dykes, occurs 1427.⁸⁵

Thomas Wykersley, died 1434.⁸⁶

Roger Wall, collated 1434, resigned 1440.⁸⁷

Edmund Tebbet, collated 1440, died 1445.⁸⁸

Roger Wall, collated 1445, resigned 1449.⁸⁹

John Bothe, collated 1449.⁹⁰

No seal is known.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. LAWRENCE, NANTWICH

NEAR the western entrance to Nantwich and at the opposite end of the town to the hospital of St. Nicholas stood the hospital of St. Lawrence, probably on the west bank of the River Weaver where Welsh Row was later built.⁹¹ Originally intended for lepers it existed by 1260 when, in return for the payment of 1d., the lepers received a sester of beer from each brewing on a messuage in Nantwich.⁹² The hospital was possibly founded by one of the Norman barons of Wich Malbank as the advowson of the hospital chapel seems to have been divided with the barony; at the end of the 15th century two-thirds of the advowson was held by the Audley family and one-third by the Lovells.⁹³ By the mid 14th century the function of the hospital seems to have changed: in 1354 an inquisition found that it ought to contain beds for three infirm paupers receiving 1d. a day. In addition there should have been a chaplain celebrating daily in the hospital but that service, which was worth 20s. a year, had lapsed for four years.⁹⁴ Little else is known of the hospital's history and the fact that further references are to the 'free chapel' or 'chantry' of St. Lawrence suggests that it had ceased to function as a hospital. In 1535 the chapel had an annual income from rents of

£4, out of which 4s. was paid in tolls for salt to the baron of Wich Malbank.⁹⁵ At some point it was merged with the chapel of St. James in Newhall (Acton par.)⁹⁶ and the chantry commissioners in 1548 valued the property of both chapels at £3 16s. a year; there were bells worth 2s. but no jewels, plate, goods, or ornaments.⁹⁷ The chapel was dissolved in 1548 and the last chaplain, Richard Wright, was paid a pension of £3 8s. 4d. a year until 1562.⁹⁸ Wright continued to hold the sites and the property of the two chapels which consisted of two crofts, called St. Lawrence's croft and Chapel croft, and two salt houses; he died in 1588 possessed of the tithes of 'the formerly dissolved free chapel of St. Lawrence'.⁹⁹ His widow married Richard Wilbraham who left money for the building, in 1613, of almshouses at Welsh Row Head, on or near the site of the hospital of St. Lawrence.¹

MASTERS OR CHAPLAINS

John Fowler, appointed 1499.²

John Incent, B.C.L., occurs 1535.³

Richard Wright, occurs 1545.⁴

No seal is known.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. NICHOLAS, NANTWICH

THE hospital of St. Nicholas which stood at the eastern end of Hospital Street in Nantwich was by tradition the foundation of William Malbank, first baron of Wich Malbank, for the benefit of travellers and the poor.⁵ In the early 15th century it was said that Malbank had endowed the hospital with lands in 1084-5.⁶ No other benefactor is known.⁷ By the 14th century the hospital was governed by a master or warden, a secular clerk who also held the hospital chapel, the free chapel of St. Nicholas.⁸ When the barony of Wich Malbank was divided on the death of

⁸¹ 1st Reg. Stretton, 178; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, ff. 166v.-167. As he resigned the wardenship in 1400 on ground of age he was probably only a namesake of the Wm. de Newhagh collated in 1404: see below.

⁸² Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, f. 86v. He was a Dominican dispensed to hold a cure of souls: A. B. Emden, *Survey of Dominicans in Eng.* 392.

⁸³ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/7, f. 92.

⁸⁴ Ibid., f. 92v. Possibly the same Wm. de Newhagh, canon of St. John's, Chester, who also held offices and prebends in Lich. cath. and was vicar-general of the diocese in 1421: Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 8, 13, 21, 26, 30; *Ch. in Chester*, 143.

⁸⁵ *Cal. Papal Reg.* viii. 16.

⁸⁶ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, f. 122.

⁸⁷ Ibid. For his offices and benefices in the diocese see Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 15, 36, 47; *Ch. in Chester*, 150. He exchanged the wardenship and a prebend in St. John's, Chester, for the prebend of Offley in Lich. cath. See also Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, iii. 1966.

⁸⁸ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, ff. 124v., 127; Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 47. For his other benefices see *Ch. in Chester*, 150.

⁸⁹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/9, f. 127; B/A/1/10, f. 29.

⁹⁰ Ibid. B/A/1/10, f. 29. He was also treasurer of Lich. cath. (Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 12) which office he resigned before 18 Nov. 1495 so he was probably the last master of the hospital; he was dead by Aug. 1496: Emden, *Biog. Reg. Cambridge*, 78.

⁹¹ Hall, *Nantwich*, 53-4. The dedication was popular for leper hospitals: R. M. Clay, *Mediaeval Hospitals of Eng.* 256-7.

⁹² B.L. Harl. MS. 2074, f. 63; Ches. R.O., DWN/1/1; Hall, *Nantwich*, 53.

⁹³ Hall, *Nantwich*, 54; *Cal. Pat.* 1494-1509, 164.

⁹⁴ B.L. Harl. MS. 506, ff. 6v., 13. The supposed connexion with Combermere Abbey (Hall, *Nantwich*, 54) is based on a misreading.

⁹⁵ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 218.

⁹⁶ That chapel was possibly in the fortified manor house of the Audley fam.: Leland, *Itin.*, ed. Toulmin Smith, v. 25.

⁹⁷ Hall, *Nantwich*, 54.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 54, 488.

⁹⁹ *Cal. Pat.* 1548-9, 47.

¹ Hall, *Nantwich*, 54, 372, 436-7, 493.

² *Cal. Pat.* 1494-1509, 164. He was a clerk of the royal chapel and was appointed by the king who held the advowson after the attainder of James, Lord Audley in 1497.

³ *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), v. 218. For his career and benefices see Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, ii. 999.

⁴ *Lancs. & Ches. Rec.* ii (R.S.L.C. viii), 395.

⁵ J. Hall, *History of the Town and Parish of Nantwich*, 17, 48.

⁶ Ibid. 500; 36 D.K.R. 359.

⁷ Hall (*Nantwich*, 49) wrongly attributed the grant of a salt house in Nantwich by Ralph Saracen to St. John's hospital, Chester (Bodl. MS. Dodsworth 31, f. 144) to this hospital.

⁸ Hall, *Nantwich*, 49.

William, the third baron, the advowson of the hospital descended through the Bassett and Burnell families and in the mid 14th century came into the hands of the Lovell family where it remained until the attainder of Francis, Lord Lovell in 1485; after a brief tenure by Sir William Stanley it was exercised by the Crown from 1495 until the hospital was dissolved.⁹ Many of the masters held offices and benefices elsewhere and few are likely to have been permanently resident in the hospital or to have been much concerned with its affairs, though one of the most distinguished, Alan Newark, who died in 1412, left 10 marks to the poor of Nantwich for the benefit of the soul of the founder of his hospital.¹⁰

In 1535 the rents of the lands and tenements of the free chapel of St. Nicholas were valued at £6 11s. 4d. a year and in 1542 the master leased the 'free chapel or hospital' with all its lands, tenements, tithes, etc. for the same sum to Ralph Wilbraham of Nantwich for 21 years.¹¹ The lease was annulled when the hospital was suppressed in 1548. The chantry commissioners reported that the 'free chantry of St. Nicholas' was worth £7 10s. a year and that there were no jewels, plate, goods, ornaments, lead, or bells. The master was awarded a pension of £5 a year which was paid until 1561.¹² On 11 November 1548 Sir Thomas Bramley, Justice of King's Bench, was granted the chapel and a mansion house, presumably the hospital building, and the lands belonging to the chapel which consisted of an orchard and a 2-a. croft next to the house, another 3-a. croft, two houses with orchards in Nantwich, a salt house of twelve leads and the vacant site of another salt house of six leads.¹³ In 1638 Sir Edmund Wright

built an almshouse for six poor men on part of the site of the former hospital.¹⁴ The 'hospital house' was used as a private house and some remains, said to be Norman in date, were discovered when alterations were made at the end of the 19th century.¹⁵

CHAPLAINS, MASTERS, WARDENS OR RECTORS

John, occurs 1259.¹⁶
 Robert de Marchumleye, occurs 1323, died 1330.¹⁷
 Alexander le Blount, presented 1330.¹⁸
 Thomas Corbet, died 1349.¹⁹
 Roger of Allerton, presented 1350, resigned 1353.²⁰
 John de Newenham, presented 1353.²¹
 Nicholas Rivell, collated 1365.²²
 Roger de Blakhurst, presented 1365, resigned 1374.²³
 John de Ormesheued, presented 1374, resigned 1377.²⁴
 John Wodehouse, presented 1377, died 1395.²⁵
 Thomas Hyne, presented 1395, resigned 1396.²⁶
 Alan Newark, B.C.L., presented 1396, died 1412.²⁷
 Ralph le Bruyn, collated 1425.²⁸
 Thomas Heywood, died 1460.²⁹
 Thomas Friston, collated 1460, resigned 1468.³⁰
 Ranulph Egerton, presented 1468, resigned 1477.³¹
 Richard Egerton, presented 1477, resigned 1507.³²
 Thomas Blythe, presented 1507, died 1531.³³
 William Gwyn, presented 1531, died 1540.³⁴
 William Hill, B.C.L., presented 1541.³⁵

No seal is known.

⁹ Ibid. 22, 40-7. The long tenure by the Lovell family led to the erroneous belief that they founded the hospital: B.L. Harl. MS. 2074, f. 63.

¹⁰ *Wills & Inventories*, i (Surtees Soc. 1835 (2)), 52, Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, ii. 1354-5.

¹¹ *Valor Eccl.* v. 218; Hall, *Nantwich*, 51.

¹² Hall, *Nantwich*, 51. For a 15th-cent. chest said to have belonged to the hospital see Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 450; A. Pugin, *Specimens of Gothic Architecture*, ii (1823), 27-8.

¹³ *Cal. Pat.* 1547-8, 348. The salt houses were in Great Wood St. and Pepper St.: Hall, *Nantwich*, 52.

¹⁴ Hall, *Nantwich*, 52, 365.

¹⁵ Ibid. 52-3.

¹⁶ B.L. Harl. MS. 1967, f. 113v. He was chaplain of the hospital. Hall (*Nantwich*, 49) wrongly listed William de la Bach as warden in 1316-17: above, hospital of St. John.

¹⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1321-4, 362; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 106.

¹⁸ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/2, f. 106.

¹⁹ Ibid. f. 127. He was chaplain of the chantry chapel of St. Nicholas.

²⁰ Ibid.; *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 111.

²¹ *Blk. Prince's Reg.* iii. 111. He held prebends in Lich. cath.: Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 21, 55, 66.

²² *1st Reg. Stretton*, 166.

²³ Ibid. 166, 177.

²⁴ Ibid. 177, 180.

²⁵ Ibid. 180; Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/6, f. 60. He was dean of St. John's, Chester and chamberlain of Chester: *Ch. in Chester*, 125-6.

²⁶ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/6, f. 60.

²⁷ Ibid. f. 60v.; 36 *D.K.R.* 359; *Wills & Inventories*, i. 51-2. For details of his career see Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, ii. 1354-5.

²⁸ *Reg. Chichele* (Cant. & York Soc.), i. 226.

²⁹ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/12, f. 98.

³⁰ Ibid. ff. 98, 104. He had been chaplain of the hospital.

³¹ Ibid. ff. 104, 111.

³² Ibid. f. 111; B/A/1/14 i, f. 55. For his later offices and benefices see *V.C.H. Staffs.* iii. 287n.

³³ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14 i, ff. 51, 68. He also held the prebend of Colwich in Lich. cath.: Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 27.

³⁴ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14 i, f. 48; B/A/1/14 iii, f. 38v. He also held the prebend of Storfold in Lich. cath.: Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 57.

³⁵ Lich. Jt. R.O., B/A/1/14 iii, f. 38v. He also held the prebend of Weeford in Lich. cath. and was 50 yrs. old in 1548: Le Neve, *Fasti*, 1300-1541, *Cov. & Lich.* 65; Hall, *Nantwich*, 51. See also Emden, *Biog. Reg. Oxford*, 1501-40, 310.

CHESTER CATHEDRAL

1541-1660

THE former abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, was reconstituted the cathedral of Christ and St. Mary in August 1541, with an establishment consisting of a dean and six prebendaries.¹ It was the second of the six former monasteries to be so re-founded by Henry VIII; Westminster Abbey had been made a cathedral some eight months earlier, and Gloucester, Peterborough, Bristol, and Oxford were shortly to follow.² Chester's administration was set out in statutes promulgated in 1544, which were very similar to those issued at about the same time for other cathedrals of the New Foundation.³ In addition to the dean and prebendaries, the cathedral was to be served by 6 minor canons, a deacon and sub-deacon, 6 lay clerks or conducts, 8 choristers and a master, 2 teachers of grammar, 24 grammar scholars, 6 bedesmen, 2 under-sextons, a butler, 2 porters, a cook, and an under-cook.⁴ The right to appoint prebendaries, at first reserved to the Crown, was given in 1558 to the bishop of Chester in compensation for his loss of the advowson of Workington (Cumb.).⁵ The cathedral's endowment consisted of 9 Cheshire manors which had belonged to St. Werburgh's abbey, and of most of the abbey's other possessions in Chester and Cheshire.⁶

Thomas Clarke, last abbot of St. Werburgh's, became the first dean of Chester.⁷ He died about a month after his appointment and was succeeded by Henry Man (d. 1556), a Carthusian who had been prior of Sheen (Surr.).⁸ Man became bishop of Sodor and Man in 1546. Other deans promoted to bishoprics during the first century of the cathedral's existence were John Piers (d. 1594), William Barlow (d. 1613), and Henry Parry (d. 1616).⁹ The remaining 7 deans appointed between 1547 and 1644 died in office. Only two, John Nutter (d. 1602) and Thomas Mallory (d. 1644), survived longer than a decade; Mallory held the deanery for some 37 years, a length of tenure never exceeded.

Four of the 6 prebendaries named at the cathedral's foundation had been monks at St. Werburgh's.¹⁰ Nicholas Bucksey (d. 1566 or 1567), the former prior, retained his stall throughout the religious changes of

the generation following the dissolution, as did William Wall (d. 1573 or 1574), who had been warden of the Franciscan friary at Chester.¹¹ There is little evidence of deprivation on account of religious convictions; two prebendaries may have resigned or been deprived under Mary I in 1554 and one under Elizabeth I in 1567.¹² Two prebendaries, John Piers and John Nutter, were preferred to the deanery of Chester, another, David Lloyd (d. c. 1663) to that of St. Asaph, and a fourth, Roger Parker (d. 1629) to that of Lincoln.¹³ Apart from John Piers, three gained preferment to bishoprics; George Cotes (d. 1555) to Chester, George Downham (d. 1634) to Londonderry, and William Forster (d. 1635) to Sodor and Man.¹⁴ Among those who held positions outside the diocese of Chester were Edward Hawford (d. c. 1582), master of Christ's College, Cambridge, and John Meyre (d. c. 1623), master of Sedbergh grammar school (Yorks. W.R.).¹⁵ Others were employed within the diocese; David Yale (d. c. 1613) as chancellor, Robert Perceval (d. after 1563), Robert Rogers (d. 1595), and George Snell (d. 1655) as archdeacons of Chester, and Thomas Dod (d. 1648) as archdeacon of Richmond.¹⁶ Nepotism does not seem to have been a strong factor in the selection of prebendaries at that time. Only George Downham and Dove Bridgeman (d. 1637) were the sons of bishops of Chester.¹⁷

The statutes of Chester cathedral laid down strict rules for the residence of dean and prebendaries, whose absences were respectively limited to 100 and 80 days a year.¹⁸ Nevertheless, absenteeism was particularly marked among the cathedral dignitaries in the late 16th century. In 1559 there were said to be only two prebendaries in residence.¹⁹ In 1578 Dean Richard Longworth (d. 1579), chaplain to Queen Elizabeth I, was said to have attended only twice since his appointment six years earlier; Prebendary Hawford, master of Christ's College, had attended only once in the last ten years, and three other prebendaries had achieved little more. The schoolmaster could not remember seeing the dean or any prebendary administering communion during his own thirteen years at Chester.²⁰ At Bishop Chadderton's visitation in 1583

¹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, p. 535. For the hist. of the abbey see above, Religious Houses, Chester abbey.

² *Handbk. Brit. Chronology*, 207, 215, 227, 244, 246, 257.

³ e.g. Carlisle (Cumb.): *Statutes of Cath. Ch. of Carlisle*, ed. J. E. Prescott (2nd edn.), 5.

⁴ The stats. only survive in late copies, e.g. Ches. R.O., EDD 2/55, a 19th-cent. copy with Eng. translation.

⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1557-8, 260-1.

⁶ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xvi, pp. 535-6.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 535.

⁸ R. V. H. Burne, *Chester Cath.* 3.

⁹ Piers was bp. of Rochester (1576-7) and Salisbury (1577-89) and abp. of York; Barlow bp. of Rochester (1605-8) and Lincoln; Parry bp. of Gloucester (1607-10) and Worcester: *Handbk. Brit. Chron.* 227, 236, 249, 252,

255, 262, 265.

¹⁰ R. V. H. Burne, *Monks of Chester*, 180. 5 of the 6 minor canons had also been monks there: *ibid.*

¹¹ R. V. H. Burne, *Chester Cath.* 3-4, 43, 48.

¹² *Ibid.* 19, 44.

¹³ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 268, 270; D. R. Thomas, *Hist. Dioc. St. Asaph*, 243.

¹⁴ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 268, 270; *Handbk. Brit. Chron.* 215, 255, 355.

¹⁵ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 37, 66.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 36-7, 60, 97, 98. Rogers gained distinction as a Chester antiquary: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 115.

¹⁷ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 67, 120.

¹⁸ Ches. R.O., EDD 2/55.

¹⁹ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 35.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 55-6.

CHESTER CATHEDRAL

the dean, Thomas Modesley (d. 1589), and three prebendaries were said to be non-resident.²¹ Forty years later Bishop Bridgeman laid down a schedule for the prebendaries' residence, with more stringent penalties than hitherto for absenteeism.²²

A recurrent theme during the first three centuries of the cathedral's existence was its poverty. In the reign of Edward VI, and again in the 1570s, the dean and prebendaries were accused of embezzlement.²³ The depletion of goods and property was aggravated by losses resulting from the reform of the currency in 1551, and plate and a bell had to be sold in order to pay stipends and to finance repairs to the fabric.²⁴ Under Dean William Cliffe (1547–58) much of the cathedral's endowment was alienated to fee-farmers. The manor of Iddinshall and land to the north-east of Chester was granted to Richard Hurleston of Picton in 1550, at the request of Edward VI and his council.²⁵ In 1553 most of the remaining lands, together with some tithes and advowsons, in Cheshire were granted to Sir Richard Cotton (d. 1556), controller of the Household.²⁶ It was afterwards claimed that the grant to Cotton was made under duress; the dean and two prebendaries, summoned before the Privy Council to answer allegations that they had removed lead and iron from their church, were committed to the Fleet in February 1553 but released shortly before the grant to Cotton. Successive deans tried to obtain its annulment, but the best that could be achieved by the early 1580s was an increase in the fee-farm rents.²⁷ What remained of the endowment was leased out, usually for large entry fines and low rents. In 1649 it was alleged, for example, that land, mostly in Chester, and tithes leased for three lives 20 years earlier were worth nearly £500 a year more than the rent that was being paid.²⁸ In 1623 Bishop Bridgeman prohibited the leasing of property in Abbey Square, to the north of the cathedral, other than to its members; at that time part of the square was occupied by a brewhouse.²⁹ The injunction, however, was ineffective and had to be repeated fifteen years later by Archbishop Laud.³⁰

The cathedral's annual income was barely sufficient to meet its ordinary expenditure, of which the largest items were the salaries of its servants and the first-fruits and tenths paid to the Crown.³¹ There was therefore little money available for maintaining the church and other buildings. In 1578 it was alleged that the dean and chapter had pulled down some of the buildings, that lead, glass, and slate were lacking, and

that one of the prebendaries' houses was ruinous.³² Four years later some of the additional income derived from fee-farm rents was directed to be applied to repairs, and in 1583 new work at the cathedral was mentioned.³³ At the end of the century the roof and woodwork were repaired.³⁴ In the 18th century Bishop Vaughan rather than the dean and chapter was named as responsible for those repairs, and for the re-casting of five old bells in 1605 and again in 1606; Vaughan, however, had been translated to London in 1604.³⁵ Bishop Bridgeman was certainly responsible for many improvements of the fabric of the cathedral and of St. Oswald's parish church which occupied the south transept. They included the whitewashing of the interior and painting of the choir stalls, alterations to the organ, restoration of the window tracery, the removal of the consistory court from the lady chapel to the south-west tower, and the provision of cottages for the conducts in the precinct.³⁶ Work financed by the dean and chapter in the early 17th century resulted in an excess of expenditure over income in several years; in 1605, for example, the deficit was more than £90.³⁷

During the first century of the cathedral's existence there were several clashes between its members and the corporation and citizens of Chester. Despite the alienation of estates in the mid 16th century the cathedral remained a major landowner within the city.³⁸ Two of the officers serving the cathedral in the late 16th century, William Glasiour (d. 1619), vice-chamberlain of Chester, and Peter Proby, described as a servant of Sir Francis Walsingham, conflicted with the city authorities over matters unconnected with the cathedral.³⁹ In the 1570s the dean and chapter successfully opposed the erection of the city's corn market on the east side of Northgate Street, near the bishop's residence.⁴⁰ In 1607 one of the prebendaries forcibly put down the civic sword, which was being carried upright in procession before the mayor in accordance with the city's letters patent of incorporation. The mayor's right to have the sword borne upright before him, in the cathedral as elsewhere, was upheld in the Chester Exchequer.⁴¹ In the 1620s freemen of the city complained that non-freemen were able to trade within the cathedral precincts.⁴² In 1638 it was said that the corporation, after boycotting cathedral services for twelve years, had recently started to attend again but had withdrawn once more after a dispute with the dean over seating.⁴³

When Dean Thomas Mallory died in 1644, William

²¹ Ibid. 60–1.

²² 1 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 199–200.

²³ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 25, 58.

²⁴ Ibid. 22; R. H. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 152.

²⁵ *Cal. Pat.* 1558–60, 310.

²⁶ Ibid. 1553, 100.

²⁷ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 254–5; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 24–6, 72–84.

²⁸ *Lancs. and Ches. Ch. Surveys*, 1649–55, ed. H. Fishwick (R.S.L.C. i), 223–47.

²⁹ 1 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 204–5.

³⁰ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1638–9, 80–1.

³¹ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 83. A doc., probably of the mid 1550s, sets out the annual income as about £881 and ordinary expenditure as about £810: Chester City R.O., CR 65, bdle. 31. In 1575, however, income was only about £825: ibid. CR 60, box 1, pt. 2.

³² Burne, *Chester Cath.* 56–7.

³³ Ibid. 60–1, 84–5.

³⁴ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 238.

³⁵ J. Hemingway, *Hist. Chester*, i. 304, following the 18th-cent. antiquary Cowper. Cf. A. Whiting, *Bells of Chester Cath.* 3–4; *Handbk. Brit. Chron.* 215.

³⁶ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 107, 118–19; E. Barber, 'Chester Cath.: the Jacobean Work', *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xii. 8–9.

³⁷ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 3.

³⁸ *Lancs. and Ches. Ch. Surveys*, 1649–55, 223–43; the survey excludes the cath. precinct, which occupied the NE. corner of the walled city.

³⁹ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 7; CR 65, bdle. 1; V.C.H. *Ches.* ii. 39 (for Glasiour's relations with the city); Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 191–2, and Chester City R.O., *Chester and the Monarchy*, 3 (for Proby).

⁴⁰ Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 298.

⁴¹ T. Hughes, 'The City against the Abbey', *J.C.A.S.* [1st ser.] pt. xii (1), 433–7.

⁴² *Calendar of Chester City Council Minutes*, 1603–42, ed. Margaret J. Groombridge (R.S.L.C. cvi), 125, 132.

⁴³ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 104–6, 114–15.

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Nicholls was appointed in his place. By that time, however, Chester was under attack by Parliamentary forces, and the new dean was unable to take up his appointment. The city fell in 1646 and the cathedral's revenues were sequestered.⁴⁴ Cathedral establishments were abolished in 1649, and the possessions of Chester cathedral were soon afterwards surveyed by the trustees appointed by Parliament.⁴⁵

1660–1839

Henry Bridgeman (d. 1682), appointed dean of Chester at the Restoration, was the son of John Bridgeman, former bishop of Chester. In 1671 he became bishop of Sodor and Man, but he continued to hold the deanery until his death.⁴⁶ No pattern can be traced in the appointment of deans between the Restoration and the mid 19th century. Five were of Cheshire origin, John Arderne (d. 1691), Thomas Brooke (d. 1757), George Cotton (d. 1805), Hugh Cholmondeley (d. 1815), and Robert Hodgson (d. 1840).⁴⁷ William Smith (d. 1787) is said to have owed his position to the influence of the Stanley family; he had been reader to the earl of Derby.⁴⁸ George Davys (d. 1864) was chaplain to the duchess of Kent and tutor to Princess Victoria before his appointment.⁴⁹ One dean, Lawrence Fogge (d. 1718), had served as a prebendary at the cathedral.⁵⁰ Dean Smith was the most eminent scholar among the 18th-century deans; both before and after his appointment he published translations of the classics.⁵¹ Dean Cholmondeley, before his appointment, collected materials for a history of Cheshire which he proposed to write.⁵² All the deans appointed between 1660 and 1815 died in office. Robert Hodgson resigned in 1820 and became dean of Carlisle.⁵³ Edward Copleston (d. 1849) became bishop of Llandaff and dean of St. Paul's in 1828; Henry Phillpotts (d. 1869) bishop of Exeter in 1831; and George Davys bishop of Peterborough in 1835.⁵⁴

Only one of the prebendaries at Chester, Dudley Garenciers (d. 1702), was promoted from a minor canonry there.⁵⁵ One, Arthur Fogge (d. 1739), was the son of a dean of Chester. Samuel Peploe (d. 1781) was son of Bishop Peploe, and John Thane (d. 1727) was nephew of Bishop Pearson. Thomas Ward (d. 1827) succeeded to the stall of his father on the latter's resignation in 1781.⁵⁶ Charles Henchman (d. 1741) was assistant and subsequently headmaster of the King's School before his appointment to a prebend in 1718.⁵⁷

Eight of the 12 archdeacons of Chester between

1660 and 1847 were prebendaries of the cathedral.⁵⁸ Two prebendaries, Samuel Peploe and John Briggs (d. 1804), were chancellors of the diocese of Chester.⁵⁹ Peploe, a prebendary from 1727 until his death 54 years later, was also archdeacon of Richmond, rector of Tattenhall, and warden of Manchester collegiate church (Lancs.).⁶⁰ Another notable 18th-century pluralist was Richard Jackson (d. 1796), who was prebendary of Chester, Lichfield, and York.⁶¹

From the late 17th century it became customary for the dean and prebendaries to allot amongst themselves most of the livings at their disposal, which included the perpetual curacies of Bromborough and Shotwick, the vicarages of St. Oswald's, Eastham, and Neston, and the rectories of Coddington, Dodleston, Handley, Northenden, Thurstaston, and West Kirby.⁶² The vicarage of St. Oswald was on three occasions in the late 17th and early 18th centuries a preliminary to attaining a prebend.⁶³ Coddington, held by minor canons from 1710 to 1748, passed afterwards to prebendaries. Dodleston was held by prebendaries from 1716, and by Deans Brooke and Cotton; Handley by minor canons from 1684 to 1702 and from 1709 to 1766, by Dean Smith from 1766 to 1787, and by prebendaries for forty years after 1787. Dean Arderne obtained Neston in 1682, and was succeeded there in turn by a minor canon and three prebendaries. Northenden was held by prebendaries continuously after 1690, except between 1825 and 1826 when Dean Vaughan was rector. Dean Cholmondeley was rector of Tarporley. The 6 rectors of Thurstaston appointed between 1752 and 1808 were minor canons; West Kirby, however, was held by prebendaries after 1696, except between 1780 and 1787 when the rector was Dean Smith.⁶⁴ As early as 1660 the dean and chapter decided that the dean was to be vicar of Neston, and that each prebendary in turn should be offered the living as vacancies arose.⁶⁵ In 1761 the death of Prebendary John Mapletoft, who had held Neston and West Kirby, resulted in a re-shuffle of livings; Abel Ward took Neston instead of Dodleston, and Edward Mainwaring, who already held Coddington, was given West Kirby, while Richard Jackson resigned St. Oswald's for Ward's living of Dodleston.⁶⁶ At that time the dean, Smith, and his chapter were in dispute over the right of presentation to livings, and each side took counsel's opinion.⁶⁷ It was agreed that the dean should 'have the first option of such living as he shall think proper to accept of', and that successive vacancies were to be filled by the prebendaries in order of seniority 'till they are all served'.⁶⁸ Dean Smith

⁴⁴ Ibid. 127; *Cal. S.P. Dom.* Addenda 1625–49, 699.

⁴⁵ *Lancs. and Ches. Ch. Surveys, 1649–55*, 223–57.

⁴⁶ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 127, 130; *Handbk. Brit. Chron.* 255.

⁴⁷ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 151–2, 190, 226, 232–4, 242–3.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 216.

⁴⁹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 268.

⁵⁰ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 142.

⁵¹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 267.

⁵² Burne, *Chester Cath.* 243.

⁵³ Ibid. 248, 255; *Handbk. Brit. Chron.* 227, 246, 277.

⁵⁴ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 149, 167.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 161, 177–8, 191, 227.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 191.

⁵⁷ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 115–16.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 113, 117–18; ii. 720; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 191.

⁵⁹ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 217–18.

⁶⁰ *Dioc. Cal.* (1859), 90–102. In the early 18th cent. they also gained the presentation to Tarporley rectory at every 5th vacancy: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 229.

⁶¹ Lawr. Fogge: vicar 1672, prebendary 1673; Arthur Fogge: vicar 1699, prebendary 1702; Ric. Jackson: vicar 1739, prebendary 1744: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 306; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 142, 177, 217.

⁶² Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 235, 488, 510, 537, 725–6, 736–7, 850; iii. 613.

⁶³ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 4, chapter meeting of 5 Oct. 1660. Dean Bridgeman does not appear among the list of vicars of Neston: Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 537.

⁶⁴ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 6, chapter meetings of 29 and 31 Aug. 1761.

⁶⁵ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 221.

⁶⁶ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 6, chapter meeting of 31 Aug. 1761.

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obtained Handley in 1766.⁶⁹

Relations between the dean and prebendaries seem generally to have been harmonious. In 1668 three prebendaries certified the excellence of Dean Bridgeman.⁷⁰ Dean Arderne found it necessary in 1683 to enter in the chapter act book a protest against an alleged usurpation of his powers, claiming that the foundation deed of the cathedral gave him more authority than the 'certain model . . . received and used as statutes'; it is not clear, however, that his complaint referred to difficulties with the prebendaries.⁷¹ Apart from the dispute over presentations to livings in 1761 there are no records of disagreement until 1812, when the chapter was divided over the appointment of a clerk. The dean and two prebendaries opposed the remaining four, and refused to accept a majority decision. The four prebendaries appealed to the bishop of Chester on the question whether the dean could veto majority decisions of the chapter, and won Bishop Law's support. Dean Cholmondeley, however, held that the interpretation of the cathedral statutes lay not with the bishop but with the archbishop of York.⁷²

Bishops of Chester carried out infrequent visitations of the cathedral. Bishop Pearson held two, in 1675 and 1677, and his successor, Cartwright, visited the cathedral in 1687; as a result of that visitation, the bishop proposed for a reason not now apparent to suspend Dean Arderne, but the sentence was not put into effect.⁷³ Further visitations were held by Bishops Stratford (1692 and 1698) and Pelpoe (1728, 1738, and 1746); the next, by Bishop Law, only occurred in 1813 when the dean and chapter were in dispute; another was held by Blomfield in 1827.⁷⁴

The chapter act books, which survive in an unbroken series from the Restoration, provide information on discipline within the cathedral.⁷⁵ During the late 17th and early 18th centuries the dean and chapter seem to have spent much time in asserting control over the lesser servants. In 1746 one of the prebendaries was deprived for immorality, though he long refused to accept the bishop's sentence.⁷⁶ The chapter had many difficulties with the minor canons. By 1676 there were only four on the establishment; in that year three were disciplined. A new minor canon appointed in 1677 was expelled two years later for slandering a prebendary, and his successor lost his place for drunkenness during divine service.⁷⁷ The precentor, suspended for insolence in 1674, was threatened with dismissal by Bishop Cartwright in 1687 for neglecting services; the bishop found a more political fault in another of the minor canons who had been disrespectful about James II and his religion.⁷⁸ In 1717 the

chapter complained of frequent absences of the minor canons on Sundays.⁷⁹

Complaints about the choir and the bedesmen also occur. In 1713 the chapter ordered men in the choir who were too old or infirm to sing, or whose pronunciation was 'indecent or ill-ordered', to find substitutes.⁸⁰ Two years later the organist and choirmaster, already dismissed once in 1707 but reinstated, was expelled for fathering a bastard.⁸¹ In 1727 the conductors and vergers were warned against absence from services and excessive drinking.⁸² The six bedesmen were appointed by the Crown, and complaints about their behaviour had to be addressed to the sovereign. In 1670 Dean Bridgeman asked for a replacement for one who had run away from his wife; the replacement gave no better service, for within a month Bridgeman complained that he refused to attend prayers or conform to the statutes.⁸³ By 1686 a man had to be found to relieve the bedesmen of their duty of cleaning the church; his wages were deducted from the bedesmen's stipends.⁸⁴

Little is known of services at the cathedral before the early 19th century. In 1831 there were prayers every morning in the lady chapel, and services at 10.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. in the choir.⁸⁵ The quality of music at the services varied with the ability of individual organists and choirmasters and the interest of particular deans. Dean Bridgeman was said in 1668 to have 'given attention to the music of the choir'.⁸⁶ In 1684 the dean and prebendaries agreed to contribute towards the cost of a new organ.⁸⁷ Two organists of the late 16th century, Robert White (d. 1574) and Thomas Bateson (d. 1630), had attained distinction as composers; both moved on after short careers at Chester, White to Westminster Abbey and Bateson to Dublin.⁸⁸ Peter Stringer (d. 1673) combined many talents. He rose from choristership to the position of lay clerk and minor canon, and became precentor, organist, master of the choristers, and deputy to the receiver and treasurer. His son John succeeded to all those offices except the precentorship. Edmund Baker, organist from 1727 to 1765, was a pupil of John Blow. His successors Edward Orme (d. 1777) and John Bailey (d. 1803) did much to improve the quality of music at the cathedral, which by 1782 was one of the earliest in England to have its own anthem book. In 1823–4 the organ was restored, and a new one was built in the refectory.

The cathedral's finances, already inadequate before the Civil War, deteriorated steadily during the late 17th and 18th centuries. There were, indeed, occasional windfalls. In 1703 Mrs. Barbara Dod devised property in Boughton and Childer Thornton to aug-

⁶⁹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 725.

⁷⁰ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1667–8, 565.

⁷¹ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 5, chapter meeting of 24 Nov. 1683.

⁷² *Ibid.* pt. 7.

⁷³ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 141; *Diary of Thos. Cartwright*, ed. J. Hunter (Camd. Soc. [1st ser.] xxii), 73, 77, 82, 83, 92.

⁷⁴ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1899), 168.

⁷⁵ The act bks., kept in the cath. muniment room, were not available for examination when this article was being written. The abstracts made by Thos. Hughes in the 1870s, now part of the Chester Archaeological Society's manuscripts (Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1), have therefore been used, together with others by R. V. H. Burne published in *Chester Cath.*

⁷⁶ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 207–8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 148–9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 154.

⁷⁹ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 5, chapter meeting of 4 Dec. 1717.

⁸⁰ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 179.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 174.

⁸² Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 6, chapter meeting of 8 Aug. 1727.

⁸³ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1670, 259, 327.

⁸⁴ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 5, chapter meeting of 26 Nov. 1686.

⁸⁵ Hemingway, *Hist. Chester*, ii. 47–8.

⁸⁶ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1667–8, 565.

⁸⁷ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 5, chapter meeting of 20 Sept. 1684.

⁸⁸ For the remainder of this paragraph see J. C. Bridge, 'Organists of Chester Cath.' *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xix (2), 67–8, 74–6, 91–7, 103–15, 119.

ment the stipends of the minor canons.⁸⁹ Dean Arderne left his property to the cathedral in order to found a public library or, should that prove impossible, for other specified purposes; in 1725, following litigation, the bequest was augmented by a large share of the estate of Mrs. Jane Done (d. 1662) which included the manor-house and other lands in Tarporley.⁹⁰ In spite of such gains, however, expenditure continued to exceed income, and by 1677 the chapter was forced to resort to borrowing. In that year £100 was borrowed for roof repairs; a loan of £150 was raised towards the cost of a new organ in 1685.⁹¹ By the mid 1690s it became necessary to borrow to discharge the cathedral's ordinary debts, including first-fruits and tenths, taxes, and salaries.⁹² Such loans continued to be necessary throughout the 18th century; meanwhile the excess of expenditure over income mounted steadily to reach nearly £1,300 by 1799–1800.⁹³ Belatedly the chapter decided in 1790 that the treasurer should not undertake any new building or alterations costing more than £20 without first obtaining a chapter order.⁹⁴ By 1810–11 the accumulated deficit had reached nearly £2,500; when the four prebendaries in dispute with Dean Cholmondeley wrote to the bishop of Chester in 1813 they asked for his advice on their finances. Loans had earlier been obtained upon bonds issued under the chapter seal; the chapter's credit had become exhausted, and individual prebendaries were having to raise loans on their own notes. Tradesmen were complaining about unpaid bills, and creditors threatening legal proceedings.⁹⁵

A temporary solution to the problem was found in the appropriation of part of the entry fines for leases. As in the 16th and early 17th centuries, the chapter continued to lease at low rents, with large fines demanded for renewals. The fines were divided among the chapter.⁹⁶ Between 1801 and 1810 fines totalled more than £5,700.⁹⁷ Usually the dean was allotted a quarter of the fines, and the six prebendaries each received one eighth. In 1706 £600 of a fine of £1,600 was appropriated to the discharge of the chapter's debts, and in 1763 and 1775 fines were devoted to church repair.⁹⁸ In 1813, on Bishop Law's advice, the chapter decided that one eighth of all future fines were to be set aside for liquidating its debts; the fines themselves were standardized.⁹⁹ The treasurer's limit for unauthorized spending was reduced to £15.¹ By 1826 more than £2,000 arising from fines had been used to pay off debts.²

The perennial financial difficulties of the cathedral

resulted in repairs to the fabric being undertaken only when judged essential. In 1661 the chapter house was said to be so decayed as to be unfit for chapter meetings.³ Bishop Cartwright complained in 1687 that the cloisters were in disrepair.⁴ Only the smallest repairs could be financed from ordinary income; otherwise new sources had to be found. In 1701 the dean and chapter obtained a royal brief for repairs to the church and conventual buildings, the estimated cost of which was £7,000.⁵ In 1723 public subscriptions were sought by the treasurer for repairs to the chapter house. His appeal raised more than £107 towards repairs that cost £118.⁶ Other repairs and alterations were financed by individuals. Dean Bridgeman was said to have been liberal in improving the prebendaries' houses.⁷ Bishop Gastrell had the interior of the church whitewashed in 1725, and Bishop Peploe provided galleries in the choir in the 1740s.⁸ In 1751 the commissary of Richmond paid for a marble floor for the choir and a new roof for the cloisters.⁹ Dean Cholmondeley is said to have paid particular attention to improving the cloisters.¹⁰ Under Hodgson, his successor, the Chester architect Thomas Harrison was called on for advice about the fabric; an appeal for £7,000 for its restoration was made by Bishop Law.¹¹ Dean Copleston levelled the ground in the cloister and churchyard and had a drainage ditch dug outside the church; inside, he provided at his own cost a high screen to divide St. Oswald's parish church, in the south transept, from the body of the cathedral.¹² By 1830 the lessees of the properties to the north of the cathedral, in Abbey Square and Abbey Street, had built new houses there.¹³

Disputes between the cathedral staff and Chester corporation still occasionally arose after the Restoration. In 1683 the chapter entered in the act book that as 'a body incorporate separate from the city of Chester and not within the district of the same city' they would not pay levies demanded by the corporation in respect of the cathedral precincts.¹⁴ The mayor and magistrates forced their way through the Abbey Gateway in 1739 in order to proclaim war against Spain.¹⁵ At the end of the 18th century the corporation was said to be refusing to pay compensation for a piece of ground taken over for widening Northgate Street.¹⁶

From the late 18th century the cathedral became more closely involved in the life of the city and county. The corporation attended services there to mark occasions of national importance such as the commemoration of peace in 1814.¹⁷ In 1772, as part of the first

⁸⁹ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 72.

⁹⁰ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 159–60, 183–5; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 83, 228, 249–50.

⁹¹ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt 5, chapter meetings of 19 June 1677, 2 Oct. 1685.

⁹² *Ibid.* pt. 5, chapter meetings of 13 Jan., 1 May 1693, 25 July 1696.

⁹³ *Ibid.* pt. 6, *passim*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* pt. 6, chapter meeting of 25 Nov. 1790.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pt. 7, letter of 27 March 1813.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pt. 7, chapter meetings 5 Feb. 1801–10 Aug. 1810.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pt. 5, chapter meeting of 3 Sep. 1706; pt. 6, chapter meetings of 28 Nov. 1763, 1 Dec. 1775.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* pt. 7, chapter meetings of 20 Oct., 10 Dec. 1813.

¹ *Ibid.* pt. 7, chapter meeting of 9 Dec. 1813.

² Burne, *Chester Cath.* 239.

³ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 4, chapter meeting

of 14 Feb. 1661.

⁴ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 157–8.

⁵ *I Sheaf*, i, p. 197.

⁶ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 185–6.

⁷ *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1667–8, 565.

⁸ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 188, 205.

⁹ *Ibid.* 205.

¹⁰ Hemingway, *Hist. Chester*, i. 322, ii. 48.

¹¹ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 243–6.

¹² Hemingway, *Hist. Chester*, ii. 66; J. Hicklin, *Hist. Chester Cath.* 54.

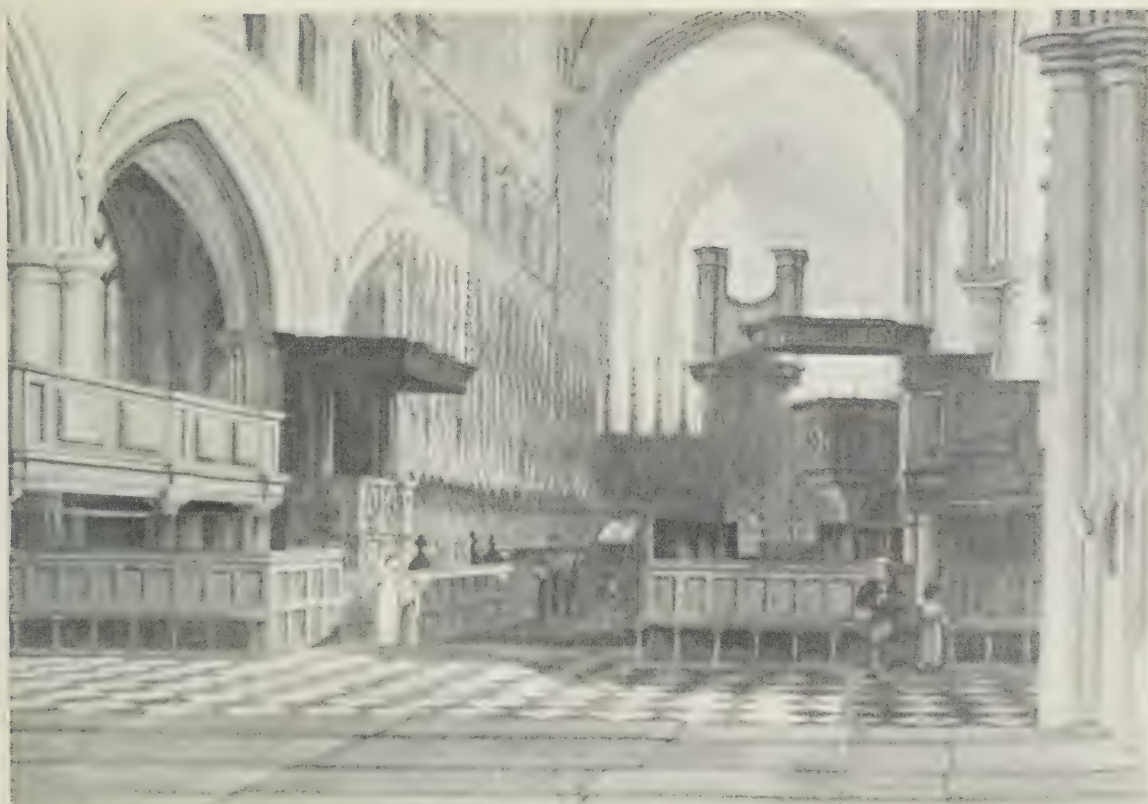
¹³ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 218–20, 252–5.

¹⁴ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 5, chapter meeting of 28 June 1683.

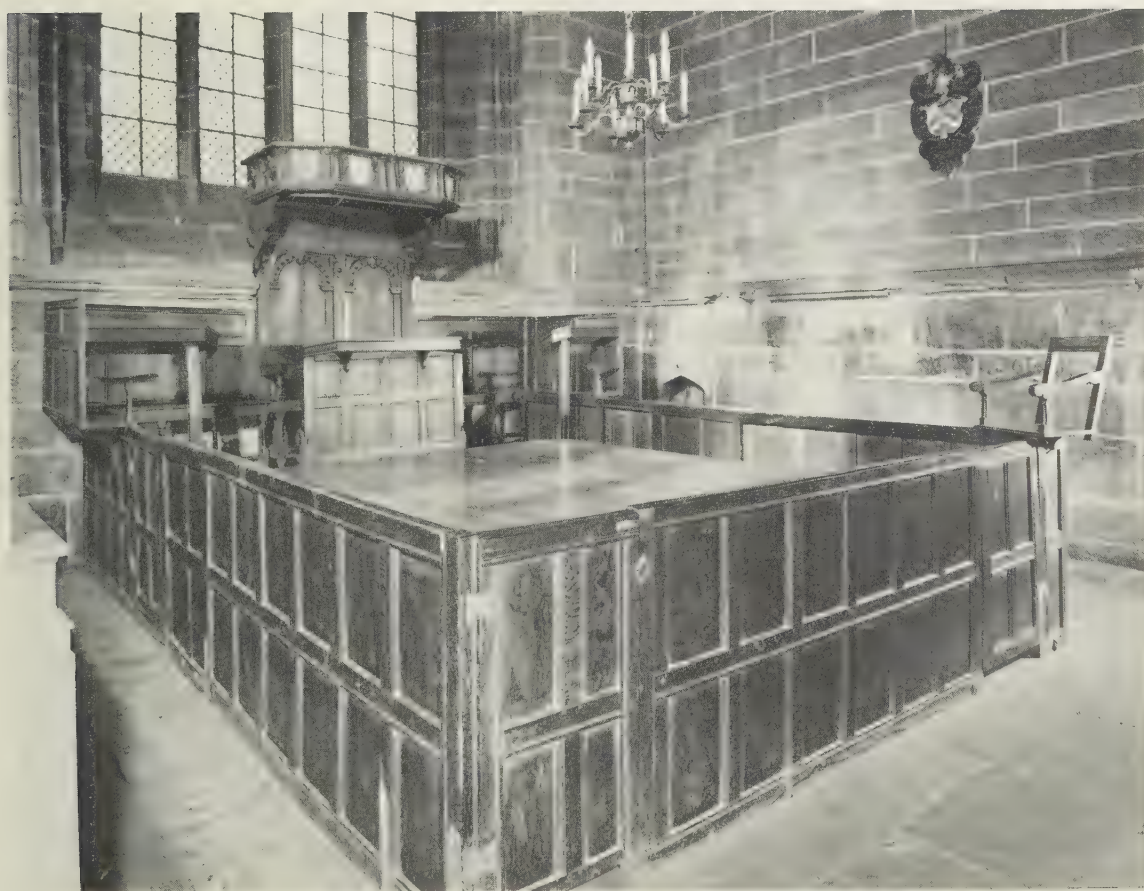
¹⁵ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 197–8.

¹⁶ Chester City R.O., CR 60, box 1, pt. 6, chapter meeting of 24 June 1794.

¹⁷ Hemingway, *Hist. Chester*, ii. 260.



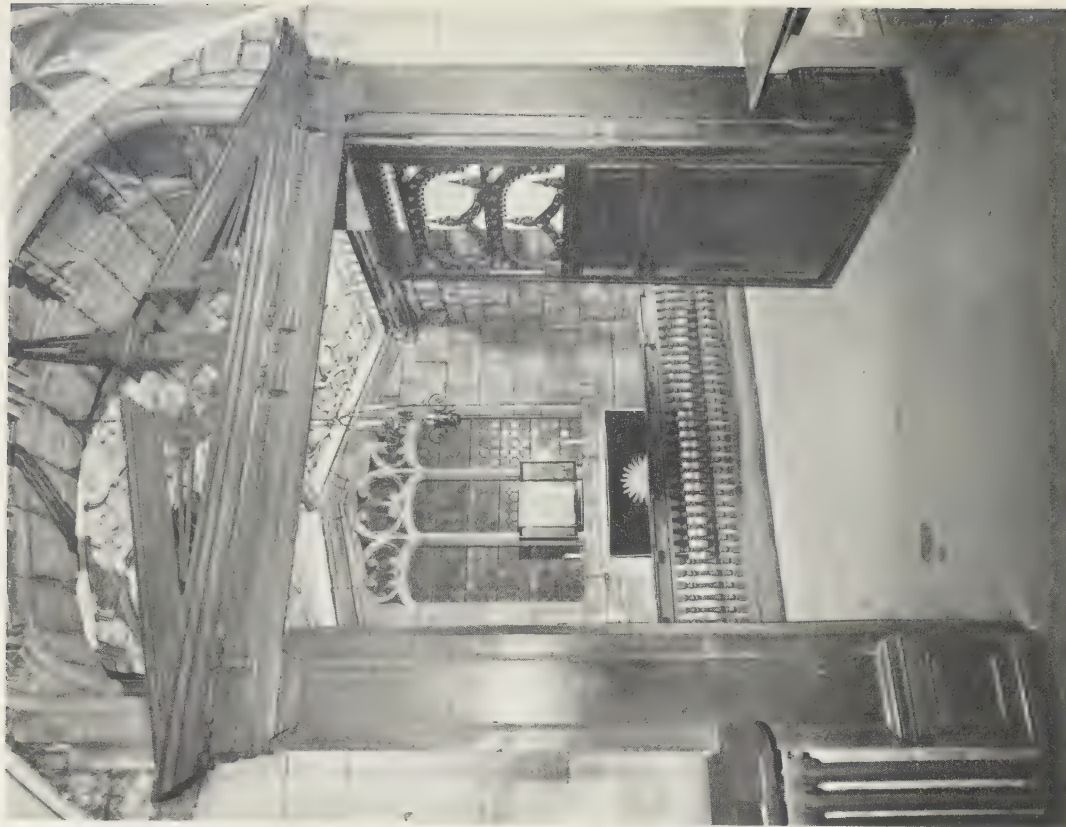
The Choir, 1813



The Consistory Court, furnished by Bishop Bridgeman
CHESTER CATHEDRAL



JOHN BRIDEMAN (d. 1652), BISHOP OF CHESTER



CHESTER CATHEDRAL: ST. ANSELM'S CHAPEL
formerly the bishop's chapel; chancel ceiling
and fittings installed by Bishop Bridgeman

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music festival staged in the city, three oratorios by Handel were performed in the nave. Further festivals, the profits of which were given to local charities, were held at intervals between 1783 and 1829. In 1786, for the first time, the west end of the nave was adapted as a stage for the orchestra, and in 1823 similar arrangements were made for a choral performance in the refectory.¹⁸ Dean Cholmondeley was reputed to be a devoted supporter of charities in the city of Chester.¹⁹

1839–1979

The appointment of Frederick Anson as dean in 1839 was followed almost immediately by reorganization under the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act, 1840.²⁰ Two of the 6 prebends, now restyled canonries, were suspended. The bishop was empowered to appoint up to 24 honorary canons. Bishop Sumner was slow to take up the power; by 1846 only 4 had been appointed.²¹

Before his appointment Dean Anson had been a canon at Southwell (Notts.). He was said to have improved the choral services at the cathedral soon after his installation, and in 1841 he obtained the services of the former organist at Southwell, Frederick Gunton (d. 1888), at Chester.²² Anson was also said, in 1856, to have 'done more to beautify his cathedral than all his predecessors put together'.²³ His achievement lay partly in having the choir and lady chapel restored in the 1840s under the direction of the architect R. C. Hussey. The mid 18th-century galleries and the pews were removed from the choir, and the stalls were moved to the west so that they lay partly under the central tower, an arrangement criticized by the *Ecclesiologist* in 1846. A new organ, second only in size to that at York, was installed on the rood screen.²⁴ Anson won particular praise for reintroducing stained-glass windows into the cathedral, where at the time of his installation only one pane of coloured glass remained.²⁵ Under his direction windows were placed above the west entrance, in the nave, in the north and south choir aisles, and in the lady chapel, to designs by Pugin, Wailes, the O'Connors, and Clayton and Bell.²⁶

Anson's reputation as a restorer has tended to become eclipsed by that of his successor, John Saul Howson. Before his death in 1867, Anson had the whole of the cathedral fabric surveyed, with a view to a comprehensive restoration scheme.²⁷ The scheme was carried out by Howson between 1868 and

1876, with Sir George Gilbert Scott as supervising architect.²⁸ Much of Scott's work would be better described as rebuilding than restoration, though Scott himself claimed archaeological evidence for his work, and in 1872 the dean felt compelled to defend himself against the charge of 'destroying the past, and erecting a new building'.²⁹ Most controversial was Scott's decision to shorten the south choir aisle and terminate it in an apse surmounted by a steep polygonal roof.³⁰ His proposal to erect a spire on the central tower was rejected, but much of the external appearance of the church is the result of his work.³¹ The restoration cost more than £90,000. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners contributed £15,000, and other sums were sought from individuals and organizations within the diocese.³² Howson himself planned the details of some of the new work, such as the sanctuary at the east end of the choir with representations of prophets on the ceiling and of four doctors, two Greek and two Latin, on the floor; and the north and south windows of the lady chapel, illustrating respectively the acts of the Apostles and the ministry of St. Paul. He presented the communion table, which was constructed of wood brought from Palestine.³³

In Howson's time the cathedral church was enlarged. In the mid 1870s the bishop's palace to the west was demolished. The north-west tower of the cathedral had been walled off from the nave and used as part of the palace; by 1885 it was incorporated into the cathedral as a baptistery.³⁴ In 1881 St. Oswald's parish church ceased to occupy the south transept; a few years earlier Dean Copleston's screen erected to divide the transept from the body of the cathedral had been removed.³⁵

Howson, author of *Horae Patrinae, or Studies in the Life of St. Peter* (1883), and, jointly with W. J. Conybeare, of *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (1852), was evangelical in sympathy rather than a High Churchman.³⁶ His successor, John Lionel Darby (d. 1919), was described after his death as 'rigidly conservative in preserving the integrity of Anglican doctrine and tradition'.³⁷ Unlike most of his predecessors and successors, Darby rose to the deanery through ecclesiastical offices in the diocese. He was successively chaplain to the bishop of Chester, diocesan inspector of schools, honorary canon, archdeacon of Chester, and canon.³⁸ In his time the work of restoration continued. Particularly important was that of the south transept, carried out under Sir A. W. and C. J. Blomfield; before Darby's death two side chapels were

¹⁸ Ibid. 41, 253, 269–70; J. C. Bridge, *A Short Sketch of the Chester Music Festivals, 1772 to 1829*; J.C.A.S. n.s. xix (2), 118.

¹⁹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 156.

²⁰ 3 and 4 Vic. c. 113.

²¹ Hicklin, *Hist. Chester Cath.* 56. There were still only 4 ten years later: T. Hughes, *Stranger's Handbk. to Chester* (1856), 89.

²² Hicklin, *Hist. Chester Cath.* 72; J.C.A.S. n.s. xii (2), 120–1.

²³ Hughes, *Stranger's Handbk. to Chester* (1856), 91.

²⁴ Hicklin, *Hist. Chester Cath.* 72–6, 79–80, 83–100.

²⁵ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 260–1.

²⁶ Hughes, *Stranger's Handbk. to Chester* (1856), 87, 90–1; G. W. O. Addleshaw, *Chester Cath.: the Stained Glass Windows, Mosaics, Monuments, and some of its other Treasures* (3rd edn.), 15, 27, 31, 33, 35.

²⁷ J. S. Howson, *Handbk. to Chester Cath.* 11.

²⁸ The restoration is described briefly in Ormerod, *Hist.*

Ches. i. 259–61. The architectural description of the cath. is reserved for treatment elsewhere in this *History*.

²⁹ J. S. Howson and A. Rimmer, *Chester as it Was*, p. ii.

³⁰ N. Pevsner and E. Hubbard, *Bldgs. of Eng.: Ches.* 136.

³¹ Ibid. 136–7; C. Hiatt, *Chester* (Bell's Cath. ser.), 24.

³² *Report of Commissioners . . . upon the Cath. Ch. of Chester* [C. 3712], p. 4, H.C. (1883), xxi. For examples of individual and corporate gifts to the restoration see Howson, *Handbook to Chester Cath.*, *passim*.

³³ Addleshaw, *Chester Cath.* 35; *Pictorial Hist. of Chester Cath.* 16, 20; Hiatt, *Chester*, 59.

³⁴ F. L. M. Bennett, *Chester Cath.* 52.

³⁵ Ibid. 60–1; Hiatt, *Chester*, 42.

³⁶ D.N.B.

³⁷ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1919), 161. For a dispute between Darby and his chapter and the headmaster of the King's School over the latter's entitlement to a stall in the cath. see below, The King's School, Chester.

³⁸ R. Head, *Ches. at Opening of 20th Cent.* 215.

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added to it.³⁹ A start was also made on the restoration of the conventual buildings, particularly the cloisters and the east end of the refectory.⁴⁰

The role of the cathedral and its staff in the life of Chester and its neighbourhood continued to develop throughout the second half of the 19th century. Dean Howson found the nave of the church 'if used at all . . . used only as a place for loitering'. From the completion of its restoration in 1872 it was used for Sunday evening services.⁴¹ In 1879 the organist, J. C. Bridge (d. 1929), revived the Chester music festivals, which had lapsed since 1829, and organized them as a triennial event.⁴² The precentor said in 1888 that he hoped that the opening service of the festival that year, to be held in the nave, would be attended by 'the very lowest of the low in meanest attire'.⁴³ Chester's increasing popularity as a tourist centre in the 19th century was reflected in a succession of guide-books to the cathedral.⁴⁴ At the same time the dean and canons became more closely involved in both educational and cultural activities. Among Howson's interests in Chester were the Queen's School, the Grosvenor Museum, and the Chester School of Art; besides his guide-book to the cathedral he wrote works on local topography and history.⁴⁵ Charles Kingsley, a canon residentiary at Chester from 1869 to 1872, took the lead in promoting the Chester Society of Natural Science, Literature, and Art.⁴⁶ Deans Anson and Howson, together with Edward Barber (d. 1914), vice-dean and archdeacon of Chester, and the organist J. C. Bridge, were leading members of the Chester Architectural, Archaeological, and Historic Society.⁴⁷

Relations between the cathedral and the community were the particular interest of Darby's successor as dean, Frank Selwyn Macaulay Bennett (d. 1947). In 1920 Bennett outlined his plans for the cathedral, where 'besides the regular official services, there should be a considerable variety of use'.⁴⁸ A month after his installation, Chester became the first cathedral to open its doors to visitors without charge every day, including Sundays, an example followed by ten more cathedrals by 1925.⁴⁹ Bennett appropriated various parts of the church to the use of groups within the diocese. The south choir aisle, containing the chapel of St. Erasmus, was reserved for private devotion. Two more side chapels were added to those furnished in the south transept under Darby; the four were devoted respectively to the Boy Scouts, Church Lads' Brigade, and Boys' Brigade; the Cheshire Regiment; the Church of England Men's Society; and the Diocesan Board of Missions. The lady chapel was set aside for the Mothers' Union and the Women's Help Society; in the north choir aisle a new chapel, dedicated to St. Werburgh, was devoted to the Girl Guides

and the Girls' Friendly Society. A children's corner was established. The former monastic buildings were also adapted for the use of groups from the diocese. The cloisters were glazed, the refectory restored, and the parlour converted from a coal-house to a common room.⁵⁰

Bennett aimed to draw the whole diocese into the work of the cathedral. In 1920 he began to write 'Notes by the Dean' every month in the *Diocesan Gazette*, and summoned a 'Great Chapter' consisting of both residentiary and honorary canons; it was to be 'an advisory body, linking the diocese to the cathedral, and familiarizing the cathedral with the diocese'. In 1921 he published, for the first time, the cathedral accounts, and launched an appeal for £20,000 for restoration work. Three years later he began the practice of remembering each parish in the diocese at the cathedral services on one day each year. From 1925 a cathedral calendar was produced.⁵¹

Bennett also encouraged the more widespread use of the cathedral library. In 1849 the library was said to be well stocked in English divinity and the classics, but neglected; it contained about 1,100 volumes. Dean Howson enlarged it. In 1922 it was reorganized, and Bennett printed lists of the more useful books there in the *Diocesan Gazette*.⁵² In 1925 Bennett's son published a comprehensive guide-book to the cathedral.⁵³

The next two deans, Norman Henry Tubbs (d. 1965) and Michael McCausland Gibbs, came to Chester after service abroad, Tubbs as bishop of Rangoon and Gibbs as dean of Cape Town.⁵⁴ In 1938, under Tubbs, the Friends of Chester Cathedral were founded, 'to strengthen the spirit of worship, . . . to preserve and enrich the fabric, . . . and to support and develop the music'.⁵⁵ Dean George William Outram Addleshaw, who succeeded Gibbs in 1963, did much to publicize the architecture of the cathedral.⁵⁶ He launched an appeal fund for £300,000 for its restoration.⁵⁷ His most controversial achievement was the erection of a detached bell-tower to the south-east of the cathedral, when it became obvious in the late 1960s that continued bell-ringing would endanger the central tower.⁵⁸

In 1935 new statutes for the cathedral came into force under the Cathedrals Measures of 1931 and 1934. They were modified in 1967.⁵⁹ The cathedral's establishment under the new statutes consisted of 4 canons residentiary, 3 chaplains choral, 6 lay clerks, 16 choristers, and 24 honorary canons. Provision was made for one or two of the canons residentiary to be free to undertake work in the diocese. Canons emeriti were appointed as early as 1917.⁶⁰

The number of services in the cathedral increased under Dean Bennett. By 1927 there were regularly 9

³⁹ Addleshaw, *Pict. Hist. Chester Cath.* 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Howson, *Handbk. to Chester Cath.* 17, 18.

⁴² Obituary in *J.C.A.S. N.S.* xxviii (2), 220-2.

⁴³ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1888), 59-60.

⁴⁴ e.g. Hicklin, *Hist. Chester Cath.* (1846), Howson, *Handbk. to Chester Cath.* (1882), Hiatt, *Chester* (1897), E. Barber, *Handbk. to Chester Cath.* (1910).

⁴⁵ *D.N.B.*

⁴⁶ J. D. Siddall, *Formation of Chester Soc. of Natural Science, Literature, and Art*, 15.

⁴⁷ *J.C.A.S.* [1st ser.], i. 77; *N.S.* i. 226-7, xxviii (2), 220-2; Head, *Ches. at Opening of 20th Cent.* 208.

⁴⁸ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1920), 83-90.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 138; (1925), 107.

⁵⁰ F. L. M. Bennett, *Chester Cath.* 52, 61-2, 70, 87, 91.

⁵¹ *Chester Dioc. Gaz.* (1920), 147-9; (1921), 74-7, 159-60; (1924), 277, 303.

⁵² *Ibid.* (1921), 37-8; (1922), 126.

⁵³ F. L. M. Bennett, *Chester Cath.*

⁵⁴ *Crockford* (1955-6), 427, 1181.

⁵⁵ Friends of Chester Cath. publicity leaflet.

⁵⁶ *Chester Cath.* (1965); *Pict. Hist. Chester Cath.* (1969); 'Architects, Sculptors, Designers, and Craftsmen 1770-1970 whose Work is to be seen in Chester Cath.' *Archit. Hist.* xiv. 74-109.

⁵⁷ *Ches. Observer*, 20 May 1977.

⁵⁸ Whiting, *Bells of Chester Cath.* 10 sqq.

⁵⁹ *Ches. R.O.*, EDD 2/57, 2/59.

⁶⁰ *Dioc. Cal.* (1946), 11.

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services on Sundays, and 6 on weekdays; early holy communion on weekdays was performed in each subsidiary chapel in turn.⁶¹ In 1978 there were 5 services on Sundays and 3 on all weekdays except Thursdays, when there was an extra communion service.⁶²

DEANS OF CHESTER

Thomas Clark, appointed 1541, died 1541.⁶³
 Henry Man, D.D., appointed 1541, bishop of Sodor and Man 1546, resigned 1547.
 William Cliffe, D.D., Ll.D., appointed 1547, died 1558.
 Richard Walker, M.A., appointed 1558, died 1567.
 John Piers, D.D., appointed 1567, resigned 1573.
 Richard Longworth, D.D., appointed 1573, died 1579.
 Richard Dorset, D.D., appointed 1579, died 1580.
 Thomas Modesley, B.D., appointed 1580, died 1589.
 John Nutter, B.D., appointed 1589, died 1602.
 William Barlow, D.D., appointed 1603, bishop of Rochester 1605.
 Henry Parry, D.D., appointed 1605, bishop of Gloucester 1607.
 Thomas Mallory, B.D., appointed 1607, died 1644.
 William Nicholls, D.D., appointed 1644, died 1658.
 Henry Bridgeman, D.D., appointed 1660, died 1682.
 James Arderne, D.D., appointed 1682, died 1691.
 Lawrence Fogge, D.D., appointed 1692, died 1718.
 Walter Offley, appointed 1718, died 1722.
 Thomas Allen, Ll.D., appointed 1722, died 1732.
 Thomas Brooke, Ll.D., appointed 1732, died 1758.
 William Smith, D.D., appointed 1758, died 1787.
 George Cotton, D.D., Ll.D., appointed 1787, died 1805.
 Hugh Cholmondeley, B.D., appointed 1806, died 1815.

Robert Hodgson, D.D., appointed 1816, dean of Carlisle 1820.

Peter Vaughan, D.D., appointed 1820, died 1825.

Edward Copleston, D.D., appointed 1826, bishop of Llandaff 1827.

Henry Phillpotts, D.D., appointed 1828, bishop of Exeter 1830.

George Davys, D.D., appointed 1831, bishop of Peterborough 1839.

Frederick Anson, D.D., appointed 1839, died 1867.

John Saul Howson, D.D., appointed 1867, died 1885.

John Lionel Darby, D.D., appointed 1886, died 1919.

Frank Selwyn Macaulay Bennett, D.D., appointed 1920, resigned 1937.

Norman Henry Tubbs, D.D., appointed 1937, resigned 1953.

Michael McCausland Gibbs, M.A., appointed 1954, died 1962.

George William Outram Addleshaw, M.A., B.D., appointed 1963, resigned 1977.

Thomas Wood Ingram Cleasby, M.A., appointed 1978.

The design of the chapter seal has remained unchanged since 1541, though it is probable that a new matrix of the reverse was made after the Restoration, in the time of Dean Bridgeman.⁶⁴ The seal is round, the obverse 8.7 cm. in diameter and the reverse 8.4 cm. The obverse shows Christ appearing to the Virgin Mary, who kneels at a desk upon which is an open book. There is a building in the background. A scroll is lettered, in roman, SALVE SANCTA PARENC. Legend, roman: SIGILLUM COMUNE CATHEDRALIS ECCLESIE XPI ET BEATE MARIA [sic] CESTRIE 1541. The reverse shows Henry VIII seated on a throne, holding the orb and sceptre, between two saints. There are two kneeling figures below the king's feet, and the letters D, HB, and C. Legend, roman: . . . DEI GRACIA . . .

⁶¹ *Cath. Calendar* (1927). ⁶² *Dioc. Handbk.* (1978), 16.

⁶³ The list from Clark to Gibbs is based on Burne, *Chester Cath.*, *passim*; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 266–8; *Handbk. Brit. Chron.* For Deans Addleshaw and Cleasby see *Chester Dioc. Handbk.* (1978), 15; *Ches. Observer*, 20 May, 21 Oct. 1977.

⁶⁴ The seal is illustrated in Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i. 265,

and Burne, *Chester Cath.* 6–7. The British Library possesses a sulphur cast, apparently showing an earlier form of the reverse: *Catalogue of Seals*, ed. W. de G. Birch, i. 393–4; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 8–9. For impressions, mostly poor, of the seal in the late 19th and 20th cents. see e.g. Chester City R.O., City Council conveyances, C 798.

EDUCATION BEFORE 1903

Education before the Reformation

THERE is little evidence in Cheshire about education before the Reformation. Literacy among the relatively prosperous must have been fairly widespread, as a number of wills of the period mention books.¹ At least 12 such wills survive from the period 1400–1540, 8 of them of lay persons, including one woman. Most of the books were of a religious nature, including mass books, breviaries, and Bibles, but two clergymen had copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and a lawyer owned several legal works. At Pott Shrigley in 1492 a library was established for the use of the local population. Again most of the books were devotional, but of a popular type, including many new printed works.²

Wills also demonstrate that many gained their literacy in school, considerable numbers proceeding to more advanced education. Four instances at least are recorded of bequests to pay for children's schooling, and several more to pay for university.³ In 1539 the mayor of Chester ordered that every child over six years of age in the borough who was not employed in some trade or occupation should attend school each weekday 'to learn their belief and other devotions, prayers, and learn a trade'.⁴ Such an ordinance reflects a pious wish rather than a programme of action, but it also provides strong presumptive evidence that schools existed to which children could be sent. Although the curriculum was elementary, it suggests that schooling was taken for granted as a preparation for apprenticeship, then the standard method of learning a trade.

A few grammar schools and even fewer elementary schools can be individually identified because their presence was recorded in ecclesiastical or legal sources. At least four grammar schools were established in Cheshire before the Reformation, at Chester (by 1368), Stockport (1487), Macclesfield (1502), and Malpas (1527),⁵ and others may have existed at Bunbury and Knutsford,⁶ although the status of the last two is not clear. An elementary school was established at Pott Shrigley in 1492 as part of the bequest which produced the library, although the school seems to have closed within a few years.⁷ There is a passing notice of a school at Northenden in 1514.⁸

The mayor of Chester's ordinance suggests the presence in that town of schools otherwise unrecorded. The existence of grammar schools requiring entrants at least to read English presupposes a number of preparatory schools. At Congleton grammar school, founded later in the 16th century, it was stipulated that entrants must be able to read the New Testament in English.⁹ Malpas grammar school appears to have run its own preparatory department, for it was described as a

¹ J. T. Driver, *Ches. in Later Middle Ages*, 146–7.

² J. McN. Dodgson, 'Library at Pott Shrigley Chapel', *The Library*, xv, no. 1.

³ Driver, *Ches. in Later Middle Ages*, 147.

⁴ *Ibid.* 86.

⁵ N. Orme, *Eng. Schs. in Middle Ages*, 299, 310, 317.

⁶ G. E. Wilson, 'Hist. of Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' (Leeds Univ. M. Ed. thesis, 1952), 29.

⁷ *Ibid.* 21–2.

⁸ Orme, *Eng. Schs. in Middle Ages*, 312.

⁹ D. Robson, *Some Aspects of Educ. in Ches. in 18th Cent.* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. xiii), 54.

EDUCATION BEFORE 1903

'reading and grammar school', and required boys after one year to speak only in Latin at school.¹⁰

Although the evidence about individual schools is sketchy, it is fairly clear that demand for schooling at all levels was increasing in the late 15th and 16th centuries. The endowment of at least three grammar schools in the county between 1487 and 1527 suggests a sentiment among prosperous citizens that provision for secondary education was inadequate, and indeed the trust deeds of both Macclesfield and Malpas schools refer to the shortage of grammar schools. The absence of such a school at Nantwich received unfavourable comment in 1548.¹¹ Although some schools may have been abolished and others suspended as a consequence of the Reformation, in general it accelerated the provision of schools in the county. Of 43 schools in existence in Cheshire by 1600, 23 at least were intended as grammar schools, although not all retained or even achieved that status.¹²

The founders of grammar schools clearly intended to establish an educational ladder. A grammar-school education was the key to posts in commerce, the Church, and government service, and endowment was intended to allow poor but able boys to develop their talents. Probably the founders were not thinking of the really poor but rather of the younger sons of the lesser gentry, farmers and tradesmen, and perhaps especially of those who from some family misfortune would otherwise be unable to afford secondary education. Even so the schools were not intended to be socially exclusive; social mobility was implicit, and even explicit in foundation deeds.

Apprenticeship

Schooling affected a minority until after the Industrial Revolution. The characteristic medieval instrument of formal education was apprenticeship, which retained its dominance until the rise of new occupations and new industrial towns in the 19th century.¹³ By the 15th century, if not before, apprenticeship as a means of entry to a career had become formalized at least in the towns, where machinery existed for supervising the system and registering the articles of indenture. Precisely when apprenticeship developed into a regular system in any particular town depended upon the emergence of municipal authorities or of craft guilds. In Chester the necessary conditions obtained at least by the beginning of the 13th century; although some craft guilds received charters in the 14th they probably existed well before that. By the 16th century indentures were recorded in the Mayors' Books.¹⁴ Congleton, too, although only a town of between 400 and 500 inhabitants, had a mayor before 1399, one of whose duties was to enrol indentures. Macclesfield, Stockport, and Nantwich also had the appropriate machinery by the 15th century.¹⁵ Such enrolment could be used to restrict entry into occupations, and could also be used deliberately to favour local citizens. At Chester, for example, in 1577 a fee of 6s. 8d. was required for registering the indentures of a son of a burgess, while outsiders were charged 13s. 4d.¹⁶

The value of apprenticeship in technical training is obvious enough, and when the system became generally obsolete in the early 19th century it proved exceptionally

¹⁰ Driver, *Ches. in Later Middle Ages*, 149.

¹¹ J. Hall, *Hist. of Town and Par. of Nantwich*, 375.

¹² P. J. Wallis, 'Preliminary Register of Old Schs. in Lancs. and Ches.' *T.H.S.L.C.* cxx. 1-21.

¹³ D. Wardle, *Rise of the Schooled Society*, 2-4.

¹⁴ Chester City R.O., Class MB.

¹⁵ Driver, *Ches. in Later Middle Ages*, 42-7.

¹⁶ R. H. Morris, *Chester in Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 443.

difficult to find an alternative. To contemporaries, however, it was at least equally important as a form of social training, and for that reason much emphasis was placed on residence. By living with his master as a member of the family the apprentice learned not only the relevant technical expertise, but also the behaviour and customs proper to his profession and station in life. Indentures therefore dealt in detail and at length with questions of dress and deportment. Thus an indenture drawn up at Macclesfield in 1812 specified that the master was to provide 'good, wholesome, and sufficient clothes, meat, drink, washing, and lodging', while the boy was to 'behave himself honestly and orderly towards his master, his master's family, and his master's employers'. All this was in addition to the more obvious requirement that the boy be taught 'the occupation, calling, or business of a silk weaver . . . in all the arts or mysteries thereof'.¹⁷ Similarly, Audlem indentures of the 18th century included a regular formula forbidding dice, unlawful games, fornication, and the frequenting of taverns and alehouses. The intention clearly was that the master should be *in loco parentis*, and occasionally that was made explicit, as in the case of a girl apprenticed at Middlewich under Holford's Charity to a fustian cutter, who was to provide clothing 'suitable and proper for his said daughter'.¹⁸

The emphasis upon apprenticeship as a means of social training and discipline helps to explain its apparently inordinate length. Seven years was normal, and few indentures were for less than five, while it was not unusual for children to be bound until the age of 18 or 21. Few occupations can have required such a long period of technical training; it was the presumed efficiency of apprenticeship in controlling potentially riotous adolescents that made it so popular with parents and with the founders and administrators of charities. Its decline helped to draw attention to schooling as a disciplinary agent at the time of the Industrial Revolution.

Apprenticing a child was expensive. A premium was payable when the indenture was drawn up, and for more highly regarded occupations it might be a considerable sum. Walter Antrobus, who was apprenticed to an apothecary in 1722, paid a premium of £31, while another member of the same family bound to a Manchester draper in 1718 paid £50.¹⁹ Walter Antrobus was 15 years old; indentures for such trades were not usually entered into before 13 or 14 years and presupposed a fair preliminary education, expensive whether provided at school or by a private tutor at home. Such occupations were therefore restricted to the children of relatively prosperous families. Even the most humble craft apprenticeships called for a premium of at least £2 or £3, and usually very much more, so that the system had the effect of producing a self-perpetuating hierarchy of occupational choice, the poor having little chance of achieving the respectability bestowed by serving articles. That result was not altogether accidental. The Statute of Artificers and Apprentices, 1563, contained a clause restricting craft occupations to the rank of yeoman and above.²⁰

Numerous charities were established to assist the apprenticeship of poor children. Some, like the Chester Bluecoat Charity, provided clothing and education for several years before apprenticing the children. Schooling was also provided at Christleton, which, like Chester, had a bias towards indenturing its children as seamen.²¹ At Little Heath, Altrincham, about 30 children were clothed annually, and many were apprenticed. In 1765, for example, a girl was indentured to a local farmer with a £5 fee and a new outfit of clothing. An interesting but not particularly unusual stipulation was that the farmer was to allow her to attend school for at least one

¹⁷ *Hist. Macclesfield*, ed. C. Stella Davies, 130.

¹⁸ Ches. R.O., P 13/29/83.

¹⁹ R. L. Antrobus, *Antrobus Pedigrees*, 42, 108.

²⁰ 5 Eliz. I, c. 4.

²¹ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 38.

month a year.²² Middlewich had two substantial charities concerned with apprenticeship, Holford's founded in 1712 and Webb's of c. 1740. Holford's Charity paid a standard £5 fee and placed boys, most of whom were 14 or 15 years old, in a wide variety of occupations, including blacksmithing, shoemaking, boat building, book-binding, and several commercial businesses.²³ Bredbury, Congleton, Tarporley, and Wybunbury were other places that certainly had such charities by the end of the 18th century.²⁴

Parish authorities, too, saw in apprenticeship a way of fostering children left in their care; it had the double advantage of providing an orphan with a livelihood and of keeping him off the poor rates. Records of apprenticeship are preserved from many Cheshire parishes; at Audlem, for instance, two girls were indentured in the 1680s, one to be taught housewifery, the other for an unknown occupation.²⁵ In such cases the indentures are very explicit about the master's obligation to provide food, lodging, and clothing, but a later indenture of 1734 also requires the master to allow the boy to attend school 'every year at such time as he can conveniently spare him'.²⁶ A further example comes from Frodsham where two recently orphaned brothers aged 10 and 8 years were apprenticed in 1749 and each provided with a set of clothing.²⁷

Public Elementary Education from the Reformation to 1800

In the late 18th century, Bishop Porteous of Chester was very clear that elementary education was something provided for the working class, of very limited academic content, which led directly to employment. Education that prepared children for secondary schooling was, he felt, quite inappropriate for the labouring poor, and might indeed be politically dangerous. It should be provided in different schools for children of a higher social class. In this he represented contemporary opinion very fairly, and was unusual only in presenting his views bluntly and articulately.²⁸ Some of the early founders of charity schools, however, tried to combine elementary instruction with preparation for secondary education. Bishop Wilson's school at Burton, founded in 1724, and the school at Darnhall founded by Thomas Lee in 1699 both professed to offer classics, while Richard Comberbach (d. 1711), when he established a school at Lower Peover, instructed that any surplus endowment might be used to encourage the teaching of Latin.²⁹ In fact none of those schools appears to have provided more than an English education, and the liberal intentions of their founders were never realized.

Most founders of charity schools were quite clear that their aim was the limited education of poor children who would not proceed to further schooling. They therefore proposed a curriculum restricted to the three Rs and religious education. Thus a group of gentlemen endowed Odd Rode school in 1681 'for the education and instructing of poor children belonging to the said township, or some of the adjacent townships, in the principles of the Church of England . . . and to read, write, and cast accounts, and other useful learning for poor children'.³⁰ At Marple, sixty years later, the endowment was for eight poor children 'born and residing in

²² C. D. Rogers, 'Hist. of Char. Schs. in Bowdon, Ches.' (Leeds Univ. M. Ed. thesis, 1966), 122.

²³ Ches. R.O., P 13/29.

²⁴ Ibid. EDV 7/1/66; R. Head, *Congleton Past and Present*, 231; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 115.

²⁵ Ches. R.O., P 113/28/2-3.

²⁶ Ibid. P 113/28/21.

²⁷ 3 *Sheaf*, vii, p. 58.

²⁸ J. C. Fowler, 'Development of Elementary Educ. in Chester 1800-1902' (Liverpool Univ. M.A. thesis, 1968), 1.

²⁹ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 35-7.

³⁰ *Hist. Congleton*, ed. W. B. Stephens, 272.

Marple, to read, write, and say the Church catechism, and be instructed in the principles of the Christian religion'.³¹ Similar programmes were specified at Prestbury in 1720, where Ann Whittaker left money to teach ten of the poorest children 'from the primer to the Bible', and at North Rode in 1780, where the aim was 'the teaching and instructing in the English tongue of poor children born of paupers and indigent parents residing in North Rode'.³²

Not all founders specified all the three Rs; arithmetic was frequently omitted, and writing sometimes. The primary aim was the teaching of reading, since immense importance was attached to the ability to read the Bible and Prayer Book, which, it was hoped, would inculcate not only religious orthodoxy but also becoming conduct; the two were believed to be very closely linked. A secondary but still important aim was to equip children for careers, and for this too literacy and numeracy were fundamental, with the increasing demand for the skills of clerking, book-keeping, and accountancy.

The curriculum of charity schools in practice closely followed the founders' intentions. One or two of the larger and better financed schools offered relatively extensive courses, frequently with fringe benefits for the pupils. Chester Bluecoat school taught the three Rs and navigation. Boys were accepted at about 10 years, unusually late for a charity school, provided with a uniform, and apprenticed at about 14 years, often to the sea but otherwise to farming or trade. Christleton school offered mensuration, gauging, and navigation, in addition to the standard subjects, again with an eye to apprenticeship.³³ Seamon's Moss school at Dunham Massey made provision for an extensive programme, but it appears that in fact the master took fee-paying pupils who followed a wider course than the charity children, a common practice. At Little Heath, in contrast, although the school derived from the same bequest, the specified programme included only reading and catechism, and any educational ambitions were limited by a rule that no child could remain after 8 years of age.³⁴ Some schools achieved high reputations more or less accidentally through the appointment of especially able and conscientious teachers. At the Presbyterian school in Dukinfield, founded in 1708, the first master, Jeremiah Barlow, was able to attract pupils from a wide area,³⁵ while Rostherne school in the 1740s enjoyed a reputation as 'the greatest school for teaching arithmetic and mathematics in all the county'.³⁶

Most schools, however, were content with reading, frequently referred to at the time as 'English', and fewer insisted on writing and arithmetic. All attached the first importance to religious instruction, which was placed firmly at the centre of the curriculum. At Chester Bluecoat school the day opened and concluded with prayers, psalms, and readings from the Bible. Pupils were catechized once a week, and were to attend church and take note of the sermon every Sunday.³⁷ The regulations of Burton school sum up the message that the children were expected to absorb. The schoolmaster was required to take 'special care to make the children sensible of the end of learning, which is that they may be better able to read the Holy Scripture and therein learn their duty'.³⁸ Once children had mastered the alphabet and the simplest one-syllable words they read almost exclusively from the Bible and religious tracts, a practice unchanged until well into the 19th century. Critics argued that constant use

³¹ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 4.

³² *Ibid.* 38.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Rogers, 'Char. Schs. in Bowdon', 39, 119.

³⁵ B. Chadwick, 'Educational Provision in Hund. of Mac-

clesfield during 19th Cent.' (Manchester Univ. M. Ed. thesis, 1967), 104-5.

³⁶ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 38.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 35.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 38.

of the Bible as a manual of reading diminished its effect as a source of religious and moral inspiration, but such criticisms made little impact.

Where funds permitted, schools frequently provided vocational training, either in a general way, as at Chester Bluecoat, or more specifically, as at Nantwich, where some boys were taught shoemaking.³⁹ Girls' schools regularly offered sewing, knitting, and spinning, which might be classed as vocational in the conditions of the day, but on the whole boys were less well provided for, presumably because their occupational choice was very much wider, making training difficult to organize. In that respect schools fell short of their founders' expectations; for them vocational work had two related functions, to equip children with a trade and to protect them from idleness. As early as 1539 the mayor of Chester justified his ordinance about school attendance on the grounds that 'the wretched life of otiosity or idleness is the root of all vice and engendreth sloth, poverty, misery, and other inconveniences as voluptuosity and all other vain things'.⁴⁰ The same view prevailed at the end of the 18th century.

Foundation of charity schools continued vigorously throughout the period, but the evidence is too fragmentary for it to be possible to say with confidence either how many schools were operating at any particular time, or whether some periods produced an unusual number of new schools. References have been found to over 20 16th-century charity schools, about 35 17th-century schools, and in the 18th century a further 30 new foundations and at least 18 re-foundations or additions to existing endowments.⁴¹ Such lists, however, are not exhaustive, and it is certain that a substantial number, especially of small village schools, have not been detected. Nor is it possible in many cases to distinguish between schools which had continuous histories and those which suffered from frequent lapses and re-foundations. Even quite large institutions experienced temporary eclipse or disappeared altogether, often within a few years of foundation. Moreover, the status of individual schools is very hard to determine. The question whether or not a school should be classed as a grammar school, and therefore excluded from consideration here, is complicated by the fact that many schools undoubtedly founded for secondary education never actually functioned as anything but elementary schools while many others rapidly declined to that status. Further, since nearly all teachers took private fee-paying pupils in addition to the stipend from endowment, it is often very questionable whether a particular institution should be classified as private or public.

It has been argued that nationally the great period for the provision of elementary education was the 18th century, and that the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was the moving force,⁴² a view challenged by those who would place the emphasis rather upon the late 16th and 17th century.⁴³ The Cheshire evidence is ambiguous. It certainly supports the view that charity schools were not an 18th-century innovation. Indeed, if one takes into account the number of nominal grammar schools that actually provided elementary schooling, it might be argued that the county was as well supplied with elementary education in the 17th century as at any time before the late 19th. On the other hand, when allowance has been made for the number of early foundations which had lapsed by 1700, it is probable that 18th-century efforts at least doubled the number of charity schools in the county, and increased the number of available places in even greater proportion.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Chester City R.O., AB/1 f. 62.

⁴¹ T.H.S.L.C. cxx. 1-21; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 166 sqq.

⁴² M. G. Jones, *Char. Sch. Movement*, *passim*.

⁴³ Joan Simon, *Educ. and Society in Tudor Eng.* 152; W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in Eng.* 203.

That estimate takes no account of Sunday schools, which originated in the 18th century although they are treated here in the section on the 19th. Some of the 18th-century foundations, too, were much larger and better financed than earlier schools, offering more substantial benefits to pupils. Chester Bluecoat, Nantwich Blue Cap, and the Dunham Massey charities are the most striking examples, Dunham Massey being the largest single educational endowment in Cheshire.

About the foundation, finance, and organization of charity schools much is known. A single large endowment sometimes established several schools, as at Dunham Massey where under the will of Thomas Walton (d. 1757), steward to the earl of Stamford, nearly £2,000 was spent in building the school, £5,800 remained in hand, and a further £1,000 went to found a school at Little Heath.⁴⁴ No other endowment even approached that in size but several other schools were substantially provided for. In 1665, for example, William Gleave, who had become an alderman of the city of London, left £500 to found a free school at Woodchurch, which shortly afterwards received another significant gift in the library of nearly 400 volumes donated by a local clergyman.⁴⁵ Church Minshull school was established in 1614 by an endowment of £200 by Christopher Minshull, £50 more being added in 1668 by Ralph Wilbraham.⁴⁶ In some places a rather different form of bequest gave a school a fixed annual sum, for instance £42 a year at Alsager and £13 2s. at Barthomley.⁴⁷ In many ways that was less desirable because in time of inflation the endowment rapidly lost much of its value, causing the charity financial problems. In some cases a much smaller gift was clearly intended as a partial endowment, perhaps to encourage other benefactors. At Audlem the school only had an income from endowment of £4 9s.⁴⁸ but at Barthomley a number of subsequent contributions supplemented the original bequest.

An endowment did not necessarily imply a school building. The considerable endowment at Church Minshull was invested and the interest used to pay the minister for teaching local children free of charge in the church.⁴⁹ A rather similar arrangement on a smaller scale existed at Barrow, where the parish clerk taught four boys and girls to read and write 'by way of addition to his small salary'.⁵⁰ In Wilmslow, on the other hand, a school-house given in 1741 by Sir Henry de Travers was not endowed for a number of years,⁵¹ and elsewhere there is evidence of negotiation with local benefactors. At Malpas, for example, a school-house was bought by subscriptions and an endowment of £25 a year and a master's house then provided by Lord Cholmondeley;⁵² at Crewe a building again provided by subscriptions was endowed with £120 by a local gentleman.⁵³

Endowment frequently carried conditions, of which the most common was a limit upon the number of beneficiaries, varying from the four poor children at Barrow to the 40 boys who were clothed and educated at Nantwich.⁵⁴ Chester Bluecoat, Marple, Middlewich, Prestbury, Tarvin, and Wrenbury schools all had such limits written into their foundation.⁵⁵ Occasionally more specific conditions were laid down. At Barthomley the school was 'free to the family of Steel of Claycroft and all other parishioners not having £10 per annum',⁵⁶ and at Malpas children of

⁴⁴ Rogers, 'Char. Schs. in Bowdon', 20, 114.

⁴⁵ W. F. Irvine and F. C. Beazley, 'Notes on Par. of Woodchurch', *T.H.S.L.C.* liii. 145.

⁴⁶ Joan Beck, 'Some Aspects of Educ. in Ches. in 17th Cent.' *J.C.A.S.* xlviii. 35-6.

⁴⁷ F. Gastrell, *Notitia Cestriensis*, i (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] viii), 213.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 208.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 222.

⁵⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/12.

⁵¹ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 366.

⁵² Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 192.

⁵³ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/59.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* EDV 7/1/3, 12, 23, 56, 65.

⁵⁵ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 61, 136; *J.C.A.S.* xlviii. 37 sqq.

⁵⁶ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 213.

contributors and their heirs were educated free, a requirement which made the school more an example of mutual aid than of charity.⁵⁷

Where endowment was lacking, schools were often provided solely by subscription. Inhabitants of Bidston raised £200 in endowment in addition to the cost of building.⁵⁸ At Eccleston 'there was a small school built in . . . 1776 by the voluntary contribution of the parishioners', and at Plemstall there was 'a school erected by the parishioners where a master teaches both boys and girls . . . at so much per quarter each'.⁵⁹ In some cases subscriptions were paid in kind: Poynton school was assisted by one gentleman who gave timber and another who gave 10,000 bricks,⁶⁰ and in at least two schools, Wybunbury and Marbury, it appears that local efforts were assisted by parish funds.⁶¹ A curious motive for raising a subscription occurred at Acton, where a free school was founded 'by a subscription of the landholders and principal inhabitants at the time of the Restoration as a maintenance for Mr. Burghall, the Oliverian minister, who was then outed, but was much respected by most people'.⁶² One of the most significant contributions of the S.P.C.K. was the introduction of more systematic and intensive fund-raising techniques, with charity sermons, public meetings, published subscription lists, and persuasive publicity. The success of such methods was considerable; the endowment of Chester Bluecoat school alone exceeded £600, and the total funds raised to support 16 Cheshire schools associated with the S.P.C.K. amounted to £5,225.⁶³

For a school to thrive it was almost essential that some individual make it his special interest. Dunham Massey provides the best illustration. Here, and at the associated Little Heath foundation, funds derived from the will of Thomas Walton were directed mainly to the schools' support by the countess of Stamford.⁶⁴ Different branches of the Wilbraham family exercised a similar personal interest to the advantage of schools at Nantwich and at Odd Rode, where early in the 19th century Mrs. Wilbraham and her daughters managed the girls' side, which was said to be 'the best conducted girls' school in the country'.⁶⁵ Even in a large wealthy town like Chester schools declined into inefficiency or complete decay unless they received stimulus from an individual, such as the physician John Haygarth, himself heavily dependent upon the involvement of Bishop Porteous and Earl Grosvenor.⁶⁶

Such dependence upon local generosity and initiative inevitably produced an arbitrary distribution of schools; Congleton, for instance, had no public elementary schools at all before the 19th century, the nearest being at Astbury. Even when schools were established, ineffective management could diminish their value, either through ill-judged appointments of teachers or by the loss of all or part of the endowment, a fate which overcame schools at Mottram St. Andrew, Snelson, Bidston, and Thornton.⁶⁷

Finance was always the chief problem for charity schools. Of 68 endowments for elementary education still existing in the 1860s only 2 had an annual income exceeding £100 and very many had only £20 or less.⁶⁸ Since it was necessary to pay at least £35 for a relatively efficient master in 1760 and twice as much a century later, very few schools could afford the full-time services of a good teacher, and most

⁵⁷ Ibid. 192.

⁵⁸ W. F. Irvine, 'Notes on Ancient Par. of Bidston', *T.H.S.L.C.* xlv. 62-3.

⁵⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/15, 20.

⁶⁰ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 171.

⁶¹ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 229, 232.

⁶² Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/54.

⁶³ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 127.

⁶⁴ Rogers, 'Char. Schs. in Bowdon', 18 sqq.

⁶⁵ *Hist. Congleton*, 272.

⁶⁶ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', *passim*.

⁶⁷ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/25; Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 38-9, 359; *T.H.S.L.C.* xlv. 62-3.

⁶⁸ *Schs. Inquiry Com.*, vol. xvii [3966-XVI], p. 5, H.C. (1867-8), xxviii(14).

had either to make part-time appointments or allow the master to take private pupils to supplement his income. At Church Minshull, Barrow, Thornton, and Barthomley, for example, the vicar, curate, or parish clerk was also teacher, while Middlewich, Wilmslow, Audlem, Bidston, Wrenbury, Eccleston, Farndon, and Wistaston were only a few of the schools where all or most of the children paid fees.⁶⁹ Often the children on the foundation received free instruction only in reading, or in writing and reading, and teachers were strongly tempted to neglect them in the interest of the fee payers.

Public Elementary Education in the 19th Century

In the late 18th century the social, economic, and political changes associated with the onset of the Industrial Revolution produced a new set of problems with which the existing provision of elementary education was unable to deal. Most immediately obvious was the effect of a sharp rise in population, from about 107,000 in 1700 to 198,000 in 1801. If no other changes had occurred that would have doubled the demand for elementary schooling, but the difficulty was intensified by a radical redistribution of population, and in particular by a concentration of large numbers in the new industrial towns and villages of north-eastern Cheshire. Here the rise in population was dramatic and presented a major problem to charitable effort, especially because many of the new centres of population were in origin no more than villages with no municipal administration and no tradition of civic self-help, such as existed, for example, in Chester. In 1700 the population of Stockport was rather over 3,000; by 1801 it reached 14,830 and by 1851 30,589, but to those figures should be added the population of the rapidly expanding suburbs, giving a total for 1801 of about 23,000 and for 1851 of 50,000. At Dukinfield the expansion was even faster. The population rose from 1,737 in 1801 to 29,953 in 1861, and the town, a classic example of a village overwhelmed by unplanned and uncontrolled development, was conspicuously poor in amenities of all kinds. Even an established and historically important town like Macclesfield suffered seriously, and the child population increased by more than four times between 1801 and 1851.⁷⁰

The problems of such towns were exacerbated by their almost exclusive dependence upon one industry, as a consequence of which during the bad spells occasioned by the violent economic fluctuations of the early 19th century, a disproportionately large number of people were out of work at once and relief agencies were swamped. Such conditions led to agitation and sporadic rioting, mostly associated with dissatisfaction over wages and food prices; there was also more systematic political activity, chiefly in the larger towns. At Stockport a Reformers' Sunday school was opened in 1817 after the failure of the Blanketeers' march, and in the following year the Stockport Political Union was formed, with an active programme of adult political education. Perhaps as an offshoot of that, a 'socialist school' was opened in 1819. Such autonomous working-class educational ventures were almost always ephemeral, but they caused great alarm, and the local Sunday schools were mobilized in a determined campaign of opposition to the spread of socialist beliefs. It is, in fact, from the reports of the Stockport Sunday school that most of the information is gained about those ventures. In 1839 a 'People's Institute and School'

⁶⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/12, 25, 59; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 222. Steele, 'Study of Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', Sheffield Univ. M.A. thesis, 1968), *passim*.

⁷⁰ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' *passim*; I. J. D.

with strong Chartist affiliations was established in Dukinfield, and proved a much longer-lived institution, the day-school still operating successfully at least until the 1870s.⁷¹

Against that background the political aspect of elementary education, already apparent in the 18th century, became even more conspicuous, and there was a significant change in the relationship between school and home. Hitherto schools had aimed to supplement the efforts of parents, and charity was directed towards children whose parents would not or could not accept responsibility for raising them. It was assumed that they would be a small minority, and hence benefactors restricted the number of beneficiaries but made fairly extensive provision for each. In the early 19th century, however, as hostility between the classes intensified, schools sought rather to replace or nullify the efforts of parents. Education was designed to rescue children from their environment, and therefore it was important that all children should attend. Since money was scarce there was inevitably very little provision for each child, and political considerations demanded that more emphasis than ever be placed upon social discipline.

Industrial developments reinforced those trends. The new factories and warehouses required large numbers of unskilled workers for laborious but simple and repetitive tasks. Schools, therefore, were called upon to produce a docile, well drilled workforce, and intelligence and learning, if they led to independence of thought, were regarded as drawbacks. Such specifications go far to explain the contemporary enthusiasm for the monitorial or 'mutual' system of instruction, which promised to inculcate in pupils precisely the desired qualities of unquestioning obedience and tolerance of monotony.

Not all or even most of Cheshire was affected by those changes. Even in many of the towns expansion was relatively slow or affected by special circumstances that protected them from the worst of the problems that afflicted Manchester or Leeds. At Chester the population rise was steady, and there existed a strong and well-established administration, together with active and influential patrons of elementary education. Crewe's growth was rapid by any standards, but it was virtually a railway colony and the railway company provided adequate elementary schooling. Only late in the century did problems arise there as the company's originally enlightened attitude altered.⁷² Where, in the north-east, towns expanded late in the century, as at Alderley Edge or Wilmslow, the influx was largely of prosperous commuters who made little demand for public elementary education. The expansion of Birkenhead, Wallasey, and the Wirral area presented problems, best considered in relation to the school boards. Most of rural Cheshire was unaffected by sharp population growth; indeed, after the middle of the century many villages suffered decline, especially along the eastern borders of Cheshire, round Wincle, Wildboarclough, Rainow, and Gawsworth. Even Macclesfield showed a significant decline in the school population after 1851, and pressure upon school accommodation consequently eased.⁷³

The first serious attempt to provide elementary schooling for the whole population was the Sunday school movement. Early experiments have been traced, one in Prestbury as early as 1747,⁷⁴ but the movement really gathered momentum from the 1780s. By the mid 19th century Sunday schools were numerous, most parishes of

⁷¹ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 244, 246; Steel, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 38-9.

⁷² A. W. Geeson, 'Development of Elementary Educ. in

Crewe' (Durham Univ. M.Ed. thesis, 1969), 30-46.

⁷³ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 60, 72.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 45-6.

any size having at least two, but the really extensive development was in the industrial towns, where the problem of a mass of untaught and potentially delinquent children was most obvious.

In those towns the development of Sunday schools followed a common pattern with relatively minor variations. The first venture was nearly always a large school or system of schools organized inter-denominationally. At Chester the Methodists originated the scheme, but sought and achieved the support of the bishop.⁷⁵ At Stockport a system of district schools was established after a meeting of the Protestant denominations called by the vicar.⁷⁶ The first Macclesfield school was opened by John Whittaker, later mayor, supported by an inter-denominational committee.⁷⁷

All the town schools, however, suffered from doctrinal or financial quarrels, leading to secession and in most cases to collapse, although the ultimate effect of such disputes was to increase the provision of schooling as each sect set up its own institutions. At Chester this occurred very rapidly, certainly before 1800.⁷⁸ The Macclesfield school flourished, and after reaching an enrolment of over 2,000 pupils in five centres, opened a new building in 1814. In the same year, however, the inevitable secessions started when the Anglicans began their own school, but the town school continued as a major institution.⁷⁹ Stockport provided a slightly different pattern. The original school formed in 1784 withered ten years later after the Methodists seceded, but a huge undenominational institution, formally opened in 1815, continued in use throughout the 19th century, with an enrolment reaching as high as 5,000 children.⁸⁰

Other common features were the financial arrangements and the curriculum. Large schools generally employed paid teachers at first, often the proprietors of cheap private schools. Congleton's first Sunday school was actually held in such a school,⁸¹ but attendance was usually far too great for such a practice, and it was more usual to pay visiting teachers, either by the session, as at Stockport, or by the year, as at Chester.⁸² The use of unpaid teachers was begun by the Methodists, but soon became universal. It brought advantages; the very large number of volunteers ensured correspondingly small classes, and included many men and women of character and learning who exercised an excellent influence upon their pupils.⁸³ On the other hand the amateur teachers were generally untrained, and, since they were unpaid volunteers, were difficult to remove even when they were clearly incompetent. At Stockport the committee established a training school, appointing a professional teacher to run classes on three nights a week, but the evidence suggests that the graduates of the school were paid to teach secular subjects.⁸⁴

The curriculum of the large Sunday schools was relatively ambitious at first, with a rather surprising emphasis upon secular studies. At Congleton the regular programme was reading and religious instruction, but the abler children were encouraged to attend writing classes.⁸⁵ Reading, writing, and arithmetic were part of the regular timetable at Stockport;⁸⁶ at Macclesfield the day was divided between reading and writing and religious instruction or church attendance.⁸⁷ Since reading

⁷⁵ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 24.

⁷⁶ Steele, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 17 sqq.

⁷⁷ *Hist. Macclesfield*, 218 sqq.

⁷⁸ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 24.

⁷⁹ *Hist. Macclesfield*, 218 sqq.

⁸⁰ Steele, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 23 sqq.; Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 159 sqq.

⁸¹ *Hist. Congleton*, 275.

⁸² Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 160; Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 39-40.

⁸³ In 1803 Stockport Sunday sch. had 200 teachers: Steele, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 23.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 36.

⁸⁵ *Hist. Congleton*, 275.

⁸⁶ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 169.

⁸⁷ *Hist. Macclesfield*, 219.

alone was necessary for religious instruction, there was considerable opposition to the teaching of writing and arithmetic on Sundays and within a few years they were dropped altogether or relegated to weekdays, a move which restricted secular instruction to an enthusiastic minority.⁸⁸ For that minority, however, the weekday activities of the schools provided most valuable support and assistance. At Stockport evening classes developed into an improvement society, which in turn became the nucleus of a technical college, while a library, an infant school, and adult Sunday classes provided additional services.⁸⁹ Elsewhere opportunities were more limited, but adult classes, mutual improvement societies, sewing circles, and working men's clubs provided almost the only resources for rational recreation then available to the working classes.

An ambitious but only partly successful scheme to increase the efficiency of Sunday schools was attempted in Chester, where it was proposed to set up a system of working schools for girls. Pupils selected from the town's Sunday schools were to spend a year in each working school, learning sewing, knitting, spinning, and washing and getting up linen, in addition to the three Rs. From the working schools girls were to be selected for the Blue Girls' school. The scheme caught the public's attention and was commended by the influential Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, but in spite of repeated revivals and reorganizations it was never fully operative and by the 1820s it had been overtaken by the spread of elementary day schools.⁹⁰ Its historical significance is that it represented perhaps the earliest realization that Sunday schools were by themselves inadequate for secular instruction of the mass of the poor, and underpowered even for effective moral and disciplinary training.

Although Sunday schools represented a remarkable investment of time, money, and effort, they were not powerful enough for the social and educational tasks that they were expected to undertake. Within a few years it was realized that day schools were essential for the whole population. The obstacle to providing them was financial; it was overcome by the use of monitors through whom a single teacher could control 500 or more pupils. The system, although eventually much criticized, at first was adopted with indiscriminate enthusiasm and even Stockport grammar school employed it briefly in the 1830s.⁹¹ Chester, as usual, led the way. In 1812 the Diocesan Central School was opened, moving a few years later to a new building for 400 pupils. It took a vigorous part, appropriate to its status, in providing the very sketchy teacher training then thought adequate, and 32 intending teachers had passed through by 1817. Students were expected to 'learn the system' by spending a few weeks passing through each class in the central school, and were then sent to their own schools to reproduce as exactly as possible what they had been taught. In 1813 an even larger institution, the Earl and Countess Grosvenor's school, was opened.⁹² Stockport, by contrast, despite its greater need, was much slower; by 1830 only one Anglican and one Wesleyan school had been established, and an attempt to set up an infant school soon failed.⁹³ In Macclesfield, too, only one day school was established before 1830, and in Congleton none at all.⁹⁴

Building grants were available from government funds after 1833 and became progressively more comprehensive and generous, also covering equipment, mainten-

⁸⁸ T. W. Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, cap. IV.

⁸⁹ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 170 sqq.

⁹⁰ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 16-17, 39-41,

47.

⁹¹ B. Varley, *Hist. Stockport Grammar Sch.* 126 sqq.; D.

Wardle, *Eng. Popular Educ. 1780-1975*, 86-8.

⁹² Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 52.

⁹³ Steele, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 60.

⁹⁴ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 21-2; *Hist. Congleton*, 272, 277-8.

ance, and teacher training and considerably easing the financial burdens of school managers. By 1860 almost £1 million was being spent annually by the government in support of elementary education. At the same time the establishment of new parishes in the expanding centres of population provided a more efficient framework for organizing and financing elementary schools, the great majority of which were provided by societies with religious affiliations, such as the Anglicans' National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor and the Nonconformists' British and Foreign School Society. In addition several large works had their own 'mill' schools, sometimes actually in the factory, as at Saxby's mill, Disley, and Boston Mill, Hyde, and sometimes outside them, as at Dukinfield and Heaton Mersey. Some industrialists provided more than merely an elementary school. Boston Mill, for example, had a library and set of musical instruments, while at Flowery Field, Newton, Thomas Ashton, a local coal owner, provided a day and Sunday school and an adult institute with library, newsroom, and classes. When the school was rebuilt in 1870 Ashton bore the cost.⁹⁵ Far the most extensive efforts by an industrial concern, however, were made by the London and North Western Railway at Crewe, where the company built several schools, made substantial maintenance grants, and contributed largely to the Mechanics' Institute.⁹⁶ Works schools were often built simply to meet the legal obligation to provide part-time schooling for children employed in the works, but there were other motives. Ashton's intentions were explicitly political; his school was provided 'for the purpose of educating the poor as a safeguard against disorder. The school was intended to emphasize the social station of the labouring classes and to seek to maintain that position.'⁹⁷ The railway company's intentions were at least partly philanthropic, especially in the early years, but after 1870 an important consideration was that it was cheaper to pay for schools from its own funds than to risk the election of a school board, which would levy a rate on the company.⁹⁸

Older established charity schools generally continued their work, accepting government grant and becoming indistinguishable from newer foundations. Many nominal grammar schools also in practice served as elementary schools, often accepting government grant and inspection and employing certificated teachers, a clear admission of their altered status. In 1868 Audlem, Bunbury, Burton, Calday Grange, Frodsham, Halton, and Wallasey were all in this condition, while Acton, Darnhall, Hargrave, Malpas, and Witton were all effectively elementary schools although some more advanced work was at least attempted.⁹⁹ In contrast the Chester charity schools had risen in status. As new large elementary schools were founded the older schools were able to select from them the more able and industrious pupils and to function as what later in the century would have been called 'higher grade schools'.¹

By the mid 19th century managers of elementary schools had become aware of a problem which had earlier worried Sunday schools. They were not reaching the very poor. Many children in industrial towns were not effectively controlled, because of parental neglect or abandonment or because their parents were either too ill or too busy scraping a living to attend to them properly. Others may have been willing to attend, or their parents willing to send them, but they were prevented by their

⁹⁵ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 127, 268, 328, 392.

⁹⁶ Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 30 sqq.; W. H. Chaloner, *Social and Economic Development of Crewe*, 61-4.

⁹⁷ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 127.

⁹⁸ Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 84 sqq.

⁹⁹ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii, *passim*.

¹ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 53.



MACCLESFIELD SUNDAY SCHOOL, c. 1813



AUDLEM GRAMMAR SCHOOL



THE QUEEN'S SCHOOL, CHESTER
built 1882-3



THE KING'S SCHOOL, CHESTER
design for buildings completed by 1879

condition, ragged, dirty, and verminous. Such children were peculiarly appropriate objects of charity, but to bring them into ordinary elementary schools would be to drive away many of the more respectable pupils. They often required special medical treatment and posed special educational problems because of their exceptional ignorance and delinquency.

The larger Cheshire towns tackled the problem in the mid 19th century. Stockport was perhaps first in the field.² The Sunday School Union rented a room in 1847 in which classes were run on Sundays and weekday evenings, including reading and writing, together with sewing and knitting for girls and gardening and handicraft for boys. From the start 'ragged' schools laid much emphasis upon practical activities, partly with the intention of providing the children with a trade but also because those activities were thought to have a disciplinary value in teaching habits of concentration, industry, and attention to detail. In 1854 a day school 'for destitute lads' was opened, and in the following year a new building was provided for the combined Sunday and day schools. As a result of the Industrial Schools Act, 1865, and subsequent legislation government grant became available for schools accommodating truant and delinquent children and those of criminal parents, and the Stockport school was reorganized. After rebuilding in 1871 the school eventually moved to Offerton, where it continued into the 20th century. It offered a range of industrial occupations in addition to academic work, including tailoring, shoemaking, and making clothes and bed linen, but as ideas on reformatory education changed the curriculum became progressively more like that of an ordinary school. A Roman Catholic industrial school was also opened in Stockport, and at Heaton Mersey was the large Robert Barnes home and industrial school which was built in 1871 to accommodate destitute children from Manchester.

Chester was rather earlier than Stockport in providing day-schools for ragged children, the first being opened in 1851. In 1853 a sub-committee was set up to provide food for the most destitute, and it appears that some children were entirely clothed and fed by the committee. Four years later dormitories were opened and the school, like Stockport, became recognized as an industrial school, receiving grant and taking children from outside the town when vacancies occurred.³

At Macclesfield the original impetus for setting up ragged schools derived from a public meeting called to raise funds to finance relief during the severe winter of 1856. A clergyman opened a school for 100 children, assisted by young men from the Sunday school. Reading, writing, and religious instruction were taught, and at eight years children were introduced to industrial activities, originally knitting and clog-making. A daily meal, apparently of rice pudding, was provided by subscription. Although it was conducted on a volunteer basis in most dilapidated premises, the school succeeded. The improved appearance and behaviour of the children were so marked that they attracted the interest and approval of local gentry and industrialists. Workshops were built, craftsmen were employed as instructors, and the feeding of the children was put on a more regular basis. In 1865, when maintenance grants became available, it was decided to provide a new building with dormitories, dining room, classroom, workshops, and gymnasium. The county made a grant of £600 towards the cost in return for an agreement to take 40 children from outside Macclesfield, and large contributions were made by local notables. The land,

² This paragraph is based on Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 146, 209 sqq., 312.

³ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 121-6.

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which was owned by the governors of the grammar school, was leased on favourable terms. In its new building the school continued into the 20th century.⁴

In 1870 Parliament authorized the election of school boards where existing accommodation for elementary education was inadequate. School boards could build and maintain schools and, if they thought proper, could make by-laws to enforce pupils' attendance. After 1876 school attendance committees were set up in areas without school boards. Nationally the period of the school boards, from 1870 to 1902, was one of very rapidly rising standards and of even more rapidly rising expectations. By 1902 children remained at school until twelve or thirteen years of age; in their later years they studied material more usually associated with secondary schools. Many boards established higher grade schools at which selected pupils could prepare for school leaving examinations, and from which they could even proceed to higher education. The boundaries between elementary and secondary education thus became increasingly confused.

In 1870 Cheshire was relatively well provided with elementary schools. Chester had about 6,000 places, Stockport more than 12,000, Stalybridge 4,300, Hyde 3,900, and Congleton 2,250.⁵ There were black spots: Macclesfield had accommodation for only one third of the potential school population, while Bramhall, with a population of 2,000, had no public elementary school.⁶ In general, however, voluntary agencies had made great efforts in the county over the previous half century, and the county's record in providing elementary education was at least respectable, and in some areas, notably Chester, very good.

During the late 19th century the national trends were to some extent reflected in Cheshire. Chester had a higher grade school by 1886, Stockport by 1890, Stalybridge rather later. Accommodation in public elementary schools expanded faster than ever before; thus Stockport's provision almost doubled between 1870 and 1890.⁷ Standards rose and new subjects were introduced. Nevertheless by 1890 the county had fallen not only behind the more enterprising areas but behind the national average. Even in the three Rs the pass rate in the annual examination for 1889 was below the national average, and very significantly below a county such as Leicestershire with a not dissimilar demographic pattern. Even in London, where the problems might be thought to be very much greater, results were better. In more advanced work, from a Cheshire school population of 120,000, 1,440 passes were obtained in 'specific subjects' taught to older pupils. By comparison, in Nottingham, with only one quarter as many pupils, passes in specific subjects exceeded 5,000.⁸ In Cheshire 638 girls earned grant in practical cookery compared with 2,000 in Nottingham. Of 535 Cheshire schools under inspection not one offered a course in science, whereas 40 Nottingham schools did so. Those figures, however, give only a partial impression of the extent of Cheshire's relative decline, for it was in the 1890s that the gap between the more and less active areas really widened, as the grant system became more elastic and public opinion favoured comparatively ambitious municipal programmes.

The reasons for Cheshire's poor performance are complex. One factor was the nature of the county, largely rural with an industrial population on the fringes,

⁴ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 34 sqq.; *Hist. Macclesfield*, 271-4.

⁵ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 155-6; Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 131, 220, 338; *Hist. Congleton*, 284.

⁶ *Hist. Macclesfield*, 222; Chadwick, 'Educ. in Maccles-

field Hund.' 79 sqq.

⁷ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 171; Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 192, 220, 342.

⁸ J. T. Brunner and T. E. Ellis, *Public Educ. in Ches.* 78; cf. D. Wardle, *Educ. and Society in 19th-Cent. Nottingham*, 90-2.

mainly distributed in relatively small towns. Nationally it was the large school boards that set the pace. In 1870 provision of elementary education was, on the whole, better in rural than in urban areas, but by 1900 the situation was reversed. Technical evening schools, the training of pupil teachers, and the education of handicapped children could only take place in large towns where there were enough pupils; such activities were impossible in villages and even small towns, especially as the great majority of school boards were very small indeed, and the size of their income inhibited experiment. At Moulton, for example, a penny rate only sufficed to pay for the education of two handicapped children at a special school.⁹ A school board thus could not afford more than the absolute minimum of provision even if its members wished to provide more. Most, like the Church Coppenhall board, were always in financial trouble, unable to pay the market rate for efficient teachers and always under pressure from reluctant ratepayers to restrict expenditure.¹⁰

Unusually few school boards were established in Cheshire.¹¹ That undoubtedly contributed to the county's poor record, because, in spite of their problems and deficiencies, school boards were better placed financially than voluntary agencies, who found it increasingly difficult to keep up with the rising cost of schooling. By 1900 board schools were spending 15s. a year per child more than voluntary schools, a fact reflected in standards of building, teaching, and equipment.

Opposition to the establishment of school boards came from two chief sources. The Church did everything possible to prevent their establishment because it objected to the undenominational character of their religious instruction, and because it recognized that board schools, with the advantage of rate aid, were a threat to voluntary schools. The Church's power in rural Cheshire was particularly great; the *School Board Chronicle* spoke of 'the fact that the greatest stronghold in England of the Denominational system is the county of Cheshire'.¹² Under Anglican influence Chester, Cheadle, and Hoole accepted voluntary education rates rather than submit to the election of a board.¹³ Further strong opposition came from ratepayers who wished to avoid the cost of a board's activities, or the rigorous application of the attendance regulations that a board might be expected to institute. Farmers, for example, notoriously opposed school boards because their enforcement of school attendance deprived them of cheap seasonal labour. A local school inspector wrote, 'If the average farmer had to choose between the colorado beetle and a school board, he would not know which way to go.'¹⁴ At Crewe the railway company spent some thousands of pounds in leading the opposition to the establishment of a board.¹⁵

Opposition did not cease even when a board was elected. Even in the large towns, Congleton, Macclesfield, and Stalybridge, attempts were made to disband the board, and at Stockport such an attempt succeeded in 1879.¹⁶ Elsewhere candidates stood and were regularly elected simply on a programme of reducing expenditure, quite regardless of any argument about the quality of education provided. General apathy made those activities more effective. It was not unusual for there to be insufficient candidates at the triennial elections, while on at least one occasion, at Daresbury, the Education Department had to fill all five places by nomination.¹⁷

⁹ C. D. Rogers, 'Case against the Sch. Bds. in Ches.' *J.C.A.S.* lvii. 54.

¹⁰ Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 99 sqq.

¹¹ Brunner and Ellis, *Public Educ. in Ches.* 73.

¹² *Sch. Bd. Chronicle*, xxxvi. 496.

¹³ *J.C.A.S.* lvii. 53.

¹⁴ E. M. Sneyd-Kinnersley, *H.M.I.*, 139.

¹⁵ Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 84 sqq.

¹⁶ *J.C.A.S.* lvii. 58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 53.

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It is therefore not surprising that school boards proceeded very cautiously and that they justified their policies not on the grounds of efficiency or of educational value but of cheapness. More striking was the fact that such timidity was characteristic not only of the small rural boards, which were generally unadventurous, but also of the larger towns, the laboratories of educational experiment in the country as a whole. The *School Board Chronicle* wrote in 1891: 'Happily there is only one Stockport. . . . The place is a standing example of the mischief and demoralization of half-hearted and reactionary legislation.'¹⁸ Certainly Stockport's record was dismal.¹⁹ Even before the school board was abolished, its defenders claimed that it was the cheapest board in the country for a town of that size, and with an expenditure from the rates of less than one penny per head of the child population, it made a poor showing compared with Walsall (Staffs.) at 8.5*d* or even Rochdale (Lancs.) at 3.4*d*. In fact the *School Board Chronicle* was hardly fair, because among Cheshire towns Stockport's education rate was not exceptionally low. In 1879 Congleton, Dukinfield, Macclesfield, and Stalybridge all had lower rates, and Dukinfield's chairman proudly compared the $\frac{3}{4}$ *d*. rate there with the 9*d*. rate in Leeds.²⁰ The policy of the ratepayers at Birkenhead, where by 1890 there was a deficiency of 2,500 places, and of the railway company and the ratepayers of Crewe was simply obstruction.²¹ Conditions were perhaps worst at Congleton; the local inspector reported that, 'much as he had been prepared by the low standards in other towns . . . he was scarcely prepared for what he witnessed' there.²² In 1894 only 89 per cent of Congleton pupils passed the annual examination in reading, 63 per cent in writing, and 59 per cent in arithmetic, compared with corresponding results in Middlewich of 95, 85, and 87 per cent, and even Middlewich's relatively creditable figures were rather below the national average.

In sum, elementary education in rural Cheshire by 1900 was probably no better or worse than that in rural areas elsewhere, that is, it was reasonably efficient at a rudimentary level, but unambitious and offering no progression to secondary or higher education. That presented a problem for the future, but reflects no real discredit upon the providers of the schools, who had to work on a very small scale with no room for ambitious projects. The great breakdown was in the towns which had failed miserably to respond to the problems and opportunities of the school-board period. Unfortunately, because of the division of the urban population into relatively small units, many of which became Part 3 authorities under the Act of 1902, it was to be half a century before much was done to bring educational provision up to the standards of equivalent places elsewhere.²³

Public Secondary Education

As has already been seen, it is often hard to determine whether or not a school was truly secondary at a particular date. Indeed, it is doubtful whether more than two or three at most of the Cheshire grammar schools can genuinely claim to have been secondary schools in the full sense throughout their careers. For the purposes of this section, however, it is proposed to consider all schools that claimed the status of 'grammar school', even if it is tolerably certain that some never achieved that status in practice, and probable that others were really private, profit-making ventures.

¹⁸ *Sch. Bd. Chronicle*, xlvii. 64–5.

¹⁹ Steele, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 214.

²⁰ *J.C.A.S.* lviii. 58.

²¹ *Ibid.*; Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 40 sqq.

²² *Hist. Congleton*, 286 sqq.

²³ For educ. in Ches. after 1902 see *V.C.H. Ches.* ii. 87–9.

Where records of a school's foundation have survived, it is clear that the founder's intention was to establish what would now be called a secondary school, leading to the more respectable branches of trade, the professions, and the universities. For that purpose a course founded upon the classics was thought essential, and frequently stipulated in the statutes. At Stockport the master was required 'to teach, free of charge, any child who came to him, the science of grammar as far as their abilities would allow,'²⁴ at Hargrave 'to instruct youth in grammar and virtue',²⁵ at Audlem 'to teach and instruct freely there the youth of the parish in the English and Latin tongues',²⁶ and at Macclesfield 'to keep a free grammar school for children for evermore'.²⁷ In most schools the application of the endowment was restricted. Several, like Witton and Stockport, offered free grammar schooling to all children of the parish. Others offered a limited number of places: 24 at Chester, 8 each at Middlewich and Nantwich.²⁸

Precisely how many grammar schools were founded in Cheshire is uncertain; estimates vary between 39 and 45. Of the 39 schools listed by one writer²⁹ eight were classed by the Schools Inquiry Commission of 1868 among schools which were not and never had been grammar schools,³⁰ while seven more were not mentioned at all, a judgement which, if not conclusive, at least casts doubt on the status of those institutions in the absence of clear contrary evidence. Certainly there was never a time when as many as 40 grammar schools were operating in the county at once. It has been estimated that between 26 and 30 grammar schools functioned at some time during the 18th century,³¹ but not all or indeed many of them operated continuously at a secondary level. The Schools Inquiry Commission listed 25 endowments for secondary education, but many were in fact used at that date to finance elementary schools.

Except for Chester, founded by 1368, and Stockport, founded in 1487, all the schools were founded between 1500 and 1700, and all but three of those before 1660. The reason why so many schools were founded within that relatively brief period is clear. In the 16th and 17th centuries an expanding market existed for boys with secondary education, and to endow a school which increased the supply was an obviously useful application of philanthropy. Local patriotism contributed too; if one town possessed a grammar school its neighbour must have one as well. It appears that Sir John Percival's endowment of Macclesfield school, for example, was incited at least in part by emulation of the earlier foundation at Stockport.³² Many of the schools were endowed by local notables; some had achieved fortune elsewhere and left money for the benefit of their native places. Thus ten schools³³ were founded or substantially endowed by citizens of London, while Mottram in Longdendale was founded by an alderman of Norwich.³⁴

What is less clear is why foundations ceased almost entirely after the mid 17th century. The explanation is not to be found in general over-provision of secondary education, although the careers of certain existing schools were adversely affected by their being placed where there were too few inhabitants to support a grammar school. Private schools flourished and multiplied throughout the 18th and 19th

²⁴ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 197.

²⁵ N. Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 110.

²⁶ B. C. Redwood, 'Audlem Free Grammar Sch.' *J.C.A.S.* li. 31.

²⁷ Wilson, 'Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' 15.

²⁸ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii, *passim*.

²⁹ *T.H.S.L.C.* cxx. 18-21.

³⁰ Barthomley, Bidston, Goostrey, Middlewich, Mobber-

ley, Tarporley, Tattenhall, Wrenbury: *Schs. Inquiry Com.* 1868, xvii. 143 sqq.

³¹ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.*, App. I.

³² Wilson, 'Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' 5.

³³ Audlem, Bunbury, Frodsham, Hargrave, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Stockport, Tarvin, Witton, Woodchurch.

³⁴ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii, *passim*; Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 104 sqq.

centuries, obviously responding to a growing demand. With the shift in population that accompanied the Industrial Revolution many large centres had no endowment whatever for secondary education. Neither Birkenhead, with a population in 1861 of 51,000, nor Stalybridge (25,000), nor Dukinfield (15,000) had any. Nor was there any reluctance to contribute to educational charities, as the contemporary efforts to provide elementary schools demonstrate. The principal factor was perhaps a changed attitude towards social mixing and social mobility. In 1503 it was natural for the founder of Macclesfield grammar school to envisage a socially mixed school serving the locality, 'a free grammar school teaching there gentlemen's sons and other good men's children of the town and country thereabouts'.³⁵ Such attitudes persisted through the 16th century and into the 17th, but from the Restoration opinion changed; social groups became more consciously exclusive, and the idea that schools might serve deliberately as agents of social mobility appeared much less attractive. By the mid 19th century there had developed in Cheshire, as elsewhere, a hierarchy of secondary schools esteemed according to the social origins of their pupils.

The schools' endowments varied greatly in size. The annual income of the governors of Macclesfield school in the mid 19th century was about £1,200, one of the largest in the country, and other relatively well-endowed schools included Chester (£280 a year), Stockport (£278), Witton (£337), and Sandbach (£215 a year after 1848). By contrast the annual income at Marple was £3, at Acton £10, at Nantwich £21, and at Congleton £23.³⁶ Clearly the better-endowed schools had a considerable advantage, but only Macclesfield was rich enough to make it to some degree independent of fees. Elsewhere the income from endowment was rarely sufficient to attract strong candidates for the mastership, and it was the almost universal custom to allow, even to encourage, the master to take fee-paying pupils, especially boarders, who, at 25 to 40 guineas a year each, offered the possibility of considerable profit. In practice the grammar schools in their more successful periods were very difficult to distinguish from the private schools that were their chief rivals. At Stockport in the 1790s the master was able to make about £300 a year, a respectable income for the time, but only about £30 of that came from the foundation.³⁷ The formal salary at Congleton was even lower, merely £17 a year, and in 1814 even that was commuted in return for a master's house, leaving the school to operate entirely as a commercial undertaking.³⁸ The provision of a good house for the master was a very important consideration in those circumstances, because only if he had a large and well-appointed house could the master attract the boarders who brought the major part of his income.

Macclesfield's financial advantage is demonstrated by the fact that, apart from regularly employing two or more masters, it was able to meet very substantial extraordinary expenditure without crippling itself. In 1774, for example, it stood the charge of £438 for a private Act of Parliament allowing it to modify its curriculum and to make adjustments to the management of its property. In 1838 a further private Act enabled the governors to open a 'modern school' to broaden the scope of the charity, and in the 1850s over £5,000 was spent upon rebuilding.³⁹ Less fortunate schools found that, even if they could meet day-to-day costs, any unusual expenditure was either simply out of the question, or at best seriously affected the

³⁵ Wilson, 'Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' 5.

³⁶ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* 1868, xvii. 71.

³⁷ Varley, *Hist. Stockport Grammar Sch.* 105-6.

³⁸ *Hist. Congleton*, 287.

³⁹ Wilson, 'Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' 138-41.

school's future usefulness. For instance, the Schools Inquiry Commission reported that the disappointing performance of Witton, a school that seemed to have much in its favour, was due to the fact that 'the funds are crippled by a pension still payable to the late master . . . and by a perhaps necessary but still very large expenditure upon improvements of part of the estates'.⁴⁰ At Darnhall, where the total income from endowment was only £90, the problem of pensioning the master also affected the school's efficiency, but there the difficulty was that no pension could be afforded: 'The school has long been nothing more than a parish school, and even as such is at present very inefficient. . . . The present master has been 44 years in office and is anxious to be pensioned off.'⁴¹

Geographical position was another important factor. Unless a grammar school was situated in or very near to a substantial centre of population it faced an inevitable difficulty in finding locally enough children whose parents wished them to receive a classical education. Stockport, Chester, Macclesfield, and in the 19th century Northwich, Sandbach, and Congleton all offered promising catchment areas, but it is hard to see how Bunbury, Daresbury, Burton, or Mottram, for example, could ever hope to recruit more than a very small group of classical pupils from the locality. Inevitably they either sank to the level of higher elementary schools or, less frequently, attracted pupils from a wider area.

A school's success therefore depended to a very great extent upon the qualities of the headmaster, who was required to be at least as much an entrepreneur as an instructor. In writing of Nantwich school the Schools Inquiry Commission observed 'the chief requisite is an enterprising master willing and able to risk something for the chance of future return',⁴² and the success or failure of the Cheshire schools depended almost entirely upon finding a master who could attract fee-paying pupils, and especially boarders, and in general compete successfully against the proprietors of private schools. Even a school as prosperous and well established as Macclesfield could suffer severely when the headmaster's reputation declined, as in the 1820s, when the failing energy of the ageing Dr. Davies caused pupils to be removed to local private schools. Later in the century Macclesfield again suffered in repute, and therefore in prosperity, from a succession of clashes between heads and assistant teachers.⁴³ Less substantial schools might slide permanently to the status of elementary schools or even virtually disappear, as at Mottram and at Calday Grange in the mid 19th century. Congleton, on the other hand, through the coincidence of having two unusually effective masters, was able to reverse the usual sequence of events, and enjoyed its most successful period during the 18th and early 19th centuries.⁴⁴

The more successful a school was in attracting pupils from a distance, the more it departed from the founder's intention that it should be a nursery of local talent. On the other hand if it concentrated upon local demand it generally ceased to be a classical school in the full sense, and in the case of smaller schools, ceased to be a secondary school at all. That, of course, was a national problem, by no means confined to Cheshire schools, and one to which few if any 19th-century schools found a fully satisfactory answer. Although no Cheshire school went to the extreme of becoming a national school with no significant local connexions, many had to face criticism that they were neglecting local pupils for more profitable outsiders, or

⁴⁰ *Schs. Inquiry Com.*, xvii. 104.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 77.

⁴² *Ibid.* 73.

⁴³ Wilson, 'Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' 154 sqq., 179, 187, 191-2.

⁴⁴ *Hist. Congleton*, 274, 287.

that children on the foundation suffered for the benefit of fee-payers. Macclesfield, Stockport, Calday Grange, Halton, and Weaverham all faced that charge at one time or another.⁴⁵ The governors and masters were fully conscious of the problem, but the frequent inadequacy of the endowment and the limited demand for advanced education made recourse to fee-paying pupils inevitable. The eventual solution, the government grant, was not to come until the 20th century.

Although individual schools continued to do useful work, by the 19th century the endowed grammar schools had ceased to play a distinctive part in secondary education in Cheshire. That minority which survived as secondary schools had long been hardly distinguishable from private schools, except perhaps in being rather less sensitive to public demand. Relatively few pupils attended them; in 1868 Stockport grammar school contained 165 pupils drawn from a population of nearly 55,000, not counting suburbs, Macclesfield 39, or 140 including the modern school, drawn from 36,000, and Chester 52 drawn from 31,000. Indeed the total number of pupils then attending Cheshire grammar schools was only 1,608 out of a population well in excess of half a million, and many of those were not following secondary courses.⁴⁶ At Acton, for example, only 7 children out of 46, and at Bunbury only 23 out of 102 could be said to be so doing. Burton, Daresbury, Darnhall, Hargrave, Malpas, and Calday Grange schools did not even profess to offer secondary education.⁴⁷ Nearly all the new centres of population, Altrincham, Birkenhead, Crewe, Hyde, Runcorn, and Stalybridge, had no endowments for secondary education, and nowhere was there any endowment for the secondary education of girls.⁴⁸ Long before the end of the century it was manifestly necessary to reorganize secondary education, since charitable effort had clearly proved inadequate. Of 204 men classed in 1904 as gentry, nobility and magistrates, only 6 had attended Cheshire grammar schools; of 129 members of the commercial classes only 9, though 11 attended grammar schools elsewhere; and of 32 clergymen, only one.⁴⁹ Although private schools did much to fill the gaps, and a few non-profit-making 'proprietary' schools were established, such as Macclesfield girls' high school, Chester College science school, Dee House Convent in Chester, and Victoria College, Congleton, they all charged fees well beyond the reach of even the best-off working men, and were often designed expressly for the middle class.⁵⁰ Increasingly it became clear that only full scale intervention by central and local government could produce a system of secondary education which was not geographically arbitrary, socially exclusive, and therefore wasteful of potential talent.

Further and Higher Education

Until the 19th century there seems to have been no provision in Cheshire for formal education beyond school leaving age except for apprenticeship. Only a very small proportion indeed, even of the minority which received secondary schooling, wished or could afford to proceed to further academic education. Most of those who did so went to Oxford or Cambridge, although attendance there was rapidly becoming more of a social than an intellectual experience. Some, for religious reasons, went to those private academies that offered courses at an advanced level. Isaac Antrobus, for example, attended Frankland's academy at Kendal (Westmld.) in

⁴⁵ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii, *passim*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* vol. i [3966], p. 397, H.C. (1867-8), xxviii (1).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* xvii, *passim*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 4, 5.

⁴⁹ R. Head, *Ches. at Opening of 20th Cent.*, *passim*.

⁵⁰ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 99; J. L. Bradbury, *Chester College and Training of Teachers*, 134; *Hist. Congleton*, 300.

the 1690s before becoming master of a grammar school and later opening a successful private school at Knutsford.⁵¹ Another dissenting schoolmaster, Edward Harwood, who ran a school at Congleton, was educated at an academy in London kept by David Jennings.⁵² Scottish and Continental universities also offered opportunities to boys whose parents were looking for high academic standards or a suitable religious outlook.

Throughout the 19th century, however, the provision of further education continually exercised public attention, and few towns or villages of even moderate size did not produce at least one experiment in adult or technical education, places of the order of Mottram and Tintwistle each having mechanics' institutes and working men's institutes.⁵³ There were many failures, for the new institutions were as yet experimental. The decline of apprenticeship and the emergence of new professions and occupations with no recognized methods of training or induction had left a vacuum in the area of technical education. Nevertheless technical schools were treated with suspicion and hostility by both trainees and their employers, partly because they tended to concentrate on conveying information rather than on practical instruction. Many employers feared lest trade secrets might be revealed in discussions between trainees from different firms. Workmen often lacked the basic literary and numerical skills necessary to enable them to profit from the classes.

In Cheshire towns a consistent pattern emerges. The first stage was the establishment of a mechanics' institute or branch of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, offering classes, nearly always in the evenings, in the three Rs, grammar, mathematics, chemistry, and design. At Macclesfield those classes developed directly into a school of design assisted from 1852 by government grant, and later into a technical school, the technical classes being supported by the local chamber of commerce, assisted by a grant from the Goldsmiths' Company.⁵⁴ Classes at Dukinfield and Hyde similarly developed directly as offshoots of the mechanics' institute, or at Dukinfield of the Astley Institute which served the same purpose.⁵⁵ At Stockport and Chester there was a slight variation, in that although the mechanics' institutes offered classes, technical instruction really began to flourish when separate institutions were founded. At Stockport, for example, over £17,000 was given to build a technical school, which was then presented as a free gift to the corporation.⁵⁶ The final stage in each case was the taking over of the classes by the corporation under the terms of the Technical Instruction Act, 1889. Assisted by the rates and the use of a government fund called 'whisky money' county and county borough councils were able to expand the classes and build new premises, so that by 1900 most larger towns had at least the basis of a system of technical education.

Technical instruction, however, was not the only or even the primary purpose of mechanics' institutes. Provision of educational courses often featured prominently among the aims of the original founders of institutes, but in practice the great mass of the members were interested chiefly in joining an institution that offered facilities for rational recreation, which were otherwise conspicuously lacking for those unable to afford the subscription of social clubs, literary and philosophical societies, and similar bodies. Most mechanics' institutes organized programmes of lectures, but their nature was entertaining rather than instructive, and they very rarely followed any logical pattern. Classes of instruction frequently operated almost independently

⁵¹ Antrobus, *Antrobus Pedigrees*, 38.

⁵² Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 73.

⁵³ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 323, 348.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 37.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 107, 135.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 204.

of the institute, which did little more than offer a room, light, and heating. The mechanics' institutes, together with a few working men's clubs run by churches and chapels, and even fewer autonomous working-class ventures, provided virtually the only opportunity that a working man had for recreation outside a public house, while their classes gave a number of determined individuals the first impetus along the road of self-improvement. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that many opportunities were missed in adult education in the 19th century just as there were further disappointments in the 20th.

The question of management bedevilled mechanics' institutes, and occasioned the collapse of many. The new institutions naturally sought the patronage of the local gentry, landowners, and industrialists, who willingly responded, but in return wished to retain some control over an institution for which they felt to a degree answerable. In the unstable economic and political climate of the 1840s, it was feared that such institutions might encourage sedition. At Crewe the railway company kept very firm and explicit control of the mechanics' institute, assisted by the fact that nearly all the members were its employees.⁵⁷ The more usual approach, as used at Stockport and elsewhere, was to have two classes of members, of whom only the first, which paid a higher fee, had an effective say in the management. In that way, according to one of the sponsors of the Stockport institute, 'the respectability of the management' would be secured.⁵⁸

Oligarchical management of that kind was a scarcely veiled insult to ordinary members, given point by restrictions, common to nearly all institutes, upon discussion of religious or political issues. At Stockport, where the mechanics' institute was founded in 1825, the consequence was to drive ordinary members away altogether, and the institute failed within two years. When it reopened in 1834, in spite of repeated attempts to establish a more democratic form of management, it remained very much a middle-class institution, and the constraints upon discussion continued. The Congleton institute, although opened a generation later, in 1848, had a very similar history. It opened with powerful support, its patrons including the marquess of Westminster and Randle Wilbraham, but failed within ten years. When a new institute was opened, it claimed, significantly, to be 'entirely under the management and control of working men'.⁵⁹ The Ashton and Dukinfield institute also received early support from local industrialists who became honorary members, but within a year that support was withdrawn, presumably because of the political activities of the ordinary members.⁶⁰ Several attempts were made to establish autonomous working-class institutions, of which the most ambitious was probably the Stockport Hall of Science, opened in 1841, of which Robert Owen laid the foundation stone. It did not flourish, and in 1855 the building was sold to the Oddfellows.⁶¹ At Hyde a Chartist Working Men's Institute was opened in 1838, but also quickly failed.⁶² The People's Institute at Stalybridge, another Chartist venture, was rather more successful, and was still operating in the 1870s.⁶³

No institution of higher education, in the full sense, was opened in Cheshire in the 19th century, but an important local venture which was later to achieve that status was Chester College, opened in 1840, one of the earliest teacher-training colleges in the country. Until 1883 the college was run in conjunction with a secondary school

⁵⁷ Chaloner, *Social and Econ. Development of Crewe*, 64.

⁵⁸ Steel, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 66 sqq.

⁵⁹ *Hist. Congleton*, 290-1.

⁶⁰ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 107 sqq.

⁶¹ Steele, 'Educ. of Working Class in Stockport', 101.

⁶² Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 136.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 344.

with a scientific and agricultural bias, the fees from which were intended to contribute to the finance of the teacher-training department. The school was one of many of the period designed specifically for the education of middle-class children, and its association with a teachers' college was by no means unusual; Chester's sister college at Warrington (Lancs.) had a similar establishment for girls. The Chester science school, as it was called, appears to have been most successful; indeed the first principal, the Revd. Arthur Rigg, who was in the mould of the entrepreneur headmasters who raised 19th-century grammar schools to the level of national foundations, concentrated upon it in his later years to the detriment of the college. Probably for that reason the school was separated from the college when he retired, and a few years later was closed altogether, despite the fact that it had a first-rate staff and was able to attract the sons of distinguished men and a few pupils who achieved distinction in their own right. The college itself, after coming close to failure in the 1860s, when at one time it was down to five students, recovered steadily, and in the last years of the century was acquiring something of the ethos of a genuine college of higher education. That, however, was a difficult process involving radical changes of attitude on the part of tutors, students, and managers, and it was by no means completed by 1900.⁶⁴

Private Education

Until the 20th century free schooling was provided only for those whose parents would not or could not pay for their children's education, and except for the very few who attended endowed grammar schools on the foundation, it was of the most rudimentary nature. In practice there was very little absolutely free schooling; generally the length, quality, and prestige of schooling varied directly in proportion to its cost. It is often difficult to distinguish the private from the older endowed institutions, many of which charged fees. In this section it is proposed to deal only with schools which were clearly run for the proprietor's profit and which did not profess, however implausibly, a charitable purpose. The Chester College science school, which came very close to being a private venture of the college's first principal, will therefore be among those excluded.

The lowest category of private school, academically and socially, was occupied by private elementary schools, generally known as 'common day' or 'dame' schools. Every village, even the smallest, had one or two of them. Tintwistle in the 1840s had at least five, and Worth, with a population of under 500, had two. Their fees in the 19th century were generally in the range of 4*d.* to 6*d.* a week; when the school boards came to work out their requirements after the 1870 Act they generally considered that schools charging 9*d.* or more a week were above that class, and out of the reach of working-class families. Many such establishments were day nurseries rather than schools, which, especially in the large industrial towns, where female labour was much in demand, took children, often the merest babies, all day while their mothers worked, charging about 2*s.* 6*d.* a week. At Crewe as late as 1877 245 out of the 820 children at private elementary schools were under five years of age.⁶⁵ Naturally, academic standards were unambitious; the contemporary distinction between common day and dame schools rested upon whether a school taught the three Rs or only reading.

⁶⁴ Bradbury, *Chester College*, *passim*.

⁶⁵ Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 47-8.

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Although private elementary schools were numerous in Cheshire long before the 17th century, their presence, for example, being assumed by the mayor of Chester in 1539,⁶⁶ the earliest example of which indisputable evidence has survived operated in Hale about 1614.⁶⁷ The proprietor was one of the many who combined teaching with another trade, in his case farming. Numerous proprietors, like masters of charity schools, ran their schools as part-time ventures. The more prosperous and reputable masters, who ran what were frequently referred to as 'writing schools', providing a quasi-secondary course with a strong commercial bias, frequently did so as a side-line to some related activity. Examples are found in 1850 of teachers who were also surveyors, accountants, or auctioneers, or who ran a circulating library, activities where practitioners would have acquired commercial skills very saleable at a time when businessmen were finding it necessary to import clerks, book-keepers, and secretaries, especially from Germany, because of the shortage of competent native recruits.⁶⁸ Common day and dame schools, however, were run in conjunction with every imaginable trade, appropriate or otherwise, for example by shopkeepers, bakers, carpenters, and needlewomen. Other schools were run by women to supplement their husbands' income, or were taken on as a form of pension, like the school at Crewe run by a retired huntsman.⁶⁹ Very few schools of this type occupied more than a single room in an ordinary house, and even well-established and respectable writing schools were no larger. It was a common practice for mechanics' institutes, whose activities naturally took place mostly in the evenings, to rent rooms during the day to private school proprietors.

Private elementary schools enjoyed their greatest prosperity in the early and mid 19th century, when the population was expanding rapidly, and minders were needed for the children of the growing number of working mothers. In the 1840s Stockport had at least 47 such schools, Dukinfield 12 or 13, Congleton a similar number.⁷⁰ From about the 1860s, however, numbers fell rapidly because of the spread of public elementary schools which were cheaper and often better, although lacking in social status. The application of laws about compulsory education was a serious blow to private schools, because few of them could meet the very rudimentary requirements of the school boards and school attendance committees. When, finally, in 1891, fees in public elementary schools were abolished, private schools became very expensive by comparison. By 1900 only three remained in Stockport, and that was typical not only of Cheshire but of the country as a whole.⁷¹

At the other end of the social and intellectual scale were 'classical academies'. They provided an academic secondary education aimed at the universities and learned professions. Their intellectual standards were often very high, some of the proprietors being men of genuine distinction, and they catered for boys whose parents wished them to remain at school until 18 years, and who were prepared to pay 50 guineas or more a year, fees of £100 not being out of the ordinary for an established school. The outstanding local example, Warrington Academy, in its day one of the best schools in the country, was just outside the historical Cheshire, but there were a number of examples within the county. Although Warrington was relatively large, with several tutors, most were very small, hardly 'schools' at all in the modern sense, with perhaps only from 6 to 10 pupils. The great majority were run by clergymen who boarded the boys in their own houses, engaging visiting

⁶⁶ Fowler, 'Elementary Educ. in Chester', 1-2.

⁶⁷ R. N. Dore, *Hist. of Hale, Ches.* 124.

⁶⁸ S. Bagshaw, *Hist., Gazetteer, and Dir. Ches.* (1850), *passim*.

⁶⁹ Geeson, 'Elementary Educ. in Crewe', 10.

⁷⁰ Bagshaw, *Hist., Gaz., and Dir. Ches.* 297, 319, 417.

⁷¹ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield in Hund.' 251.

part-time tutors for any part of the curriculum which they could not manage themselves. After the Restoration, because of the penal legislation against dissenters, many schools were set up in small towns and rural areas by dissenting ministers, partly to supplement their very meagre stipends, and partly to provide secondary and even higher education for those excluded from grammar schools and universities by religious principles. An early Cheshire example was the Revd. Zachary Cawdrey (d. 1684), who ran an academy at Barthomley. The Revd. John Hamocke had a school at Chester for 20 years from 1685, after acting as chaplain to the duke of Bedford. From the 18th century come a number of examples: Samuel Eaton at Allostock, Isaac Antrobus at Knutsford, Edward Harwood at Congleton, and John Houghton at Nantwich.⁷² Although many such academies were run by dissenting ministers they were distinguished more for their excellence and their popularity than for their nonconformity. Similar institutions were run by Anglican clergymen and laymen.

Classical academies enjoyed their greatest popularity during the 18th and early 19th centuries when demand for secondary education was rising rapidly and the provision offered by the endowed public and grammar schools was quite inadequate. The classical academy offered close personal supervision by the proprietor, high academic standards, and sites which were often well removed from the temptations of large towns. In the late 19th century, however, with the revival and extension of the public schools, such academies declined in number, and by 1900 they had almost disappeared. One of the last in Cheshire was run by a Unitarian minister at Hale c. 1850.⁷³ Nevertheless, of 175 'gentry, nobility, and magistrates' whose education was recorded in 1904, 67 had been educated at private school or by private tutors. Moreover, many of the 85 who had been to public schools had previously attended private preparatory schools.⁷⁴

Far more numerous than the classical academies were the 'English' or 'English and Commercial' academies which provided most secondary schooling throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and virtually all the secondary education of girls. They were generally more local in their catchment than classical academies, and although they usually took boarders, the bulk of their pupils were day children, except in the most respected establishments. As a rule boys' schools, and some girls' schools too, offered Latin, but the real basis of their curriculum was provided by English and mathematics, supported by commercial subjects, especially in the cheaper schools, and by foreign languages. Fees varied widely, but a competent education that would fit a boy for a reputable office or professional apprenticeship could be obtained for 3 to 5 guineas a year in 1800, while boarding fees at the same period ranged from 12 to 35 guineas. Joseph Priestley ran an academy of this type at Nantwich in the late 1750s before leaving for Warrington. He taught 30 boys and had a separate class for 6 girls, a common arrangement; in addition, like many private schoolteachers, he attended a local family as a private tutor.⁷⁵ Every town of any size had several such academies, catering for girls, and for boys who would leave school at 13 to 15 years to go into business. Naturally they varied greatly in quality and aspirations. At one end of the scale were schools like Miss Catherine Owen's Ladies' Seminary at Poynton, Prestbury Commercial Boarding School, or the Misses Langwiths' day and boarding school at Mossfield House, Hollingworth; such schools charged between 15 and 25 guineas a year and drew almost exclusively upon a local clientele.

⁷² Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 73-4, 76.

⁷³ Dore, *Hist. Hale*, 72.

⁷⁴ Head, *Ches. at Opening of 20th Cent.*, *passim*.

⁷⁵ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 72.

Mossfield House was one of many that acted as a preparatory school for young boys, while offering a secondary education for girls. More ambitious altogether were Poynton school, where the fees were 31 to 40 guineas a year, and Cheadle House boarding school for girls, which charged up to 50 guineas. Although that fee secured the girls the unusual luxury of a separate bed, it was only a very basic charge to which, as in all such schools, an extensive range of 'extras' was added. Each pupil at Cheadle House had to supply her own bed linen, towels, and cutlery, while the basic fee only covered instruction in grammar, history, geography, and needlework. French, Italian, drawing, writing, and arithmetic were all extras, writing in this instance implying a training in commercial writing and business forms.⁷⁶

The decline of the English and commercial schools came much later than that of the classical academies, because the former were not in competition with the public schools.⁷⁷ In Stockport their numbers appear to have reached a peak about 1880, when at least 43 are recorded. Thereafter, numbers fell rapidly to about 22 in 1900. A similar pattern emerges in Macclesfield.⁷⁸ By contrast, little if any decline is detectable in Chester or the populous residential areas of north-east Cheshire or Wirral, because improved transport and the development of those areas as commuter centres provided a constantly expanding demand for middle-class education. Girls' private schools declined very much more slowly than boys', since there was so little provision for girls' education out of public funds. The contribution of the middle range of private schools to local education was, if anything, even more notable than that of the classical academies. Of the 98 men enumerated in 1904 in the 'commercial' class, 47 were educated privately, many more than at the public schools or local grammar or elementary schools.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 42, 306-7, 321.

⁷⁷ Many are described in advertisement section of *Morris & Co.'s Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Ches. with*

Stalybridge, (1874).

⁷⁸ Chadwick, 'Educ. in Macclesfield Hund.' 34, 251.

⁷⁹ Head, *Ches. at Opening of 20th Cent.*, *passim*.

SCHOOLS

THIS section contains histories of the more important public and endowed grammar schools in Cheshire. Other schools are reserved for treatment elsewhere in the *History*.

ACTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A SCHOOL at Acton¹ is first mentioned in the will of Richard Wilbraham of Woodhey in Faddiley (1558), who left £6 13s. 4d. a year, for ever, to a mass-priest who was to teach the children and youth of the parish free. The priest was to say a requiem mass annually, and he and his pupils were to pray daily for the souls of Wilbraham and his family.² Nothing further is known of the foundation, which apparently failed to survive the religious changes under Elizabeth I.³ A schoolmaster, Stephen Noden, listed among those attending the funeral of Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey at Acton church in 1610, was probably a private tutor to the Wilbrahams.⁴

The grammar school was re-founded in 1662, the endowment of over £400 being raised by voluntary subscription from 53 inhabitants of Acton parish and the surrounding area. The largest sums were given by Sir Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey, his mother Lady Wilbraham, Roger Wilbraham of Dorfold, and Robert, Viscount Cholmondeley (d. 1681). A further fifteen subscriptions were paid by 1679. The thirteen trustees were empowered to hire a schoolmaster, preferably a graduate, at a yearly salary of £20. He was to be provided with a school-house for himself and his pupils, and was expected to supplement his salary with fees. The descendants of all subscribers, and the children of the vicar, the clerk, and other parishioners at the discretion of the feoffees, were to be educated free; all others were to pay. Admission fees were 2s. 6d. for the sons of gentlemen, 1s. for those of yeomen, and 6d. for others. The master was to begin and conclude school daily with readings in English from the scrip-

tures, a psalm, and a prayer. He was to teach Latin and Greek and to catechize at least one hour a week. If the school exceeded 80 pupils he was to employ an usher.⁵

The foundation was later said to have been intended to maintain Edward Burghall, the puritan vicar of Acton, who was deprived in October 1662 and who had earlier been a schoolmaster at Bunbury.⁶ If such was the plan, it failed. The first master of the school, James Clewlowe, was engaged immediately after the subscriptions were made. He went to London to be ordained before his admission to the post during the vacancy in Chester diocese in 1662; nothing more is known of him.⁷ His successor, Paul Woods, exhibited his licence in the same year;⁸ he was an Oxford graduate, and was followed, between 1698 and 1744, by two Cambridge alumni, John Montgomery and Isaac Rathbone.⁹ It is likely that under those masters a grammar school curriculum was followed. In the later 18th century, however, few masters were graduates, and classical studies probably lapsed.¹⁰ Throughout its existence the school had a poor record in university places, and may have drawn few pupils from the richer classes.¹¹

Little is known of the school's finances before the 19th century. The school minute book occasionally records the feoffees' attempts to invest the foundation money. In 1662 and at the end of the 17th century the income from investments was £24 a year.¹² In 1716 John Montgomery received £20 a year from the school.¹³ Unfortunate investments later reduced the master's salary to a mere £14 a year by 1778.¹⁴ The meagre salary caused one master to make the unusual move from grammar to charity school,¹⁵ and many combined teaching with ecclesiastical office. Woods

¹ E. Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar School, 1560-1960*, includes a brief acct. of the school. A minute bk. of the Acton trustees, 1662-1885, is at Nantwich and Acton Co. Grammar Sch. Financial accts. for 1861-3 are in the Acton burial reg. for 1751-1812 at Acton ch. The help of Mr. Lloyd in preparing this acct., and of the headmaster and the Revd. D. A. Martin, vicar of Acton, in making records available, is gratefully acknowledged.

² *Lancs. and Ches. Wills and Inventories*, i. (Chetham Soc. [1st ser.] xxxiii), 86-7.

³ There is no reference to schoolmasters at Acton in the Elizabethan rec. of the dioc. or province: 4 *Sheaf*, iv, pp. 2-6.

⁴ 1 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 35-6; C. D. Rogers, 'Development of Teaching Profession, 1547-1700' (Manchester Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1973), 137.

⁵ Minute bk. 1662-1885, pp. 1-12; 3 *Sheaf*, xlvii, pp. 57-62.

⁶ D.N.B.; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/154; Lysons, *Mag. Brit.* ii (2), 471; 3 *Sheaf*, xlvii, p. 57.

⁷ Minute bk. 1662-1885, p. 15; notes in Acton burial reg. 1751-1812.

⁸ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/10, f. 15v.

⁹ Ibid. EDV 2/12, f. 28; EDV 2/24, ff. 11v., 31v.; EDP 1/5; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 249; D. Robson, *Aspects of Educ. in Ches. in 18th Cent.* (Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. xii), 106, 180.

¹⁰ Ches. R.O., EDA 1/7, f. 71; EDP 1/5; EDV 2/32, f. 7; EDV 2/36, f. 31v.; EDV 2/37, f. 31; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 108. William Morgan, B.A. (master 1772-87), was an exception: Ches. R.O., EDV 7/154.

¹¹ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 203-13; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', records no pupils of Acton entering university in the 17th cent.

¹² Minute bk. 1662-1885, p. 15; Ches. R.O., DVA 7.

¹³ Ches. R.O., EDV 1/93, f. 11.

¹⁴ Minute bk. 1662-1885, 34; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/154.

¹⁵ J. Hall, *Hist. of Town & Parish of Nantwich*, 380-1; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 70-1.

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was in orders from 1668, and in 1681 became vicar of Over.¹⁶ His successors held local curacies which perhaps were often more valuable than their mastership.¹⁷ The first and only lay master seems to have been William Allen, appointed in 1864.¹⁸

By the early 19th century the school took very few free pupils. In 1804 the vicar of Acton reported that there was a free school for five boys, for which the master received the rent of a cottage and about two acres of land.¹⁹ Fees from boarders rose rapidly at the end of the 18th century.²⁰ In 1825 it was reported that the school had fewer than thirty boys, and that the master, who was also curate of Acton, received a total income of £100.²¹

In 1837 the school was said to be well run. The endowment included a master's house, 'a very good one and in good repair', and a tenement bringing in £20 a year. The master, Lancelot Wilson, taught ten boys reading, writing, and accounts free, and took both boarders and day pupils.²² Under his successor, Daniel Chater, the school was less satisfactorily conducted. On his appointment in 1847 fees were fixed at four guineas for the first son of a parishioner, three for the second, and two for the third and subsequent sons.²³ Later there were complaints that the master was not taking free pupils, and in 1860 the trustees resolved to instruct Chater to take ten boys free and teach them the principles of religion, the elements, and, if required by their parents, all the subjects taught at the grammar school.²⁴

The efforts to improve the school failed. It closed in 1861, and reopened as a commercial school three years later.²⁵ The Taunton Commission's inspector reported in 1867 that it had suffered 'many years of neglect', and by then it had clearly ceased to be a fully classical grammar school. Although a wide curriculum, including Greek, Latin, French, English, Euclid, algebra, and history, was supposedly available, few of those subjects were actually taught. Only seven boys had advanced beyond reading, writing, and simple division; Greek was not taught at all; Latin, algebra, and history were 'nominal'. The school then contained 46 day pupils and 8 boarders, almost all farmers' sons, who mostly remained until the age of fourteen or fifteen. The commissioners felt that the school was not making the most of its opportunities.²⁶

In 1885 the school, which had debts amounting to c. £40, was amalgamated with Nantwich Grammar School.²⁷ The school building was sold to the

parishioners of Acton for £400, and demolished to enlarge the churchyard, near which it had stood.²⁸ The funds so raised were spent on buildings at Nantwich, and used to endow free scholarships, known as the Acton Scholarships, which were awarded until 1944.²⁹ The money was thereafter incorporated into a fund for the provision of school prizes and grants for sixth-form pupils.³⁰

AUDLEM GRAMMAR SCHOOL

AUDLEM certainly had a school³¹ in the mid 16th century; in *The Choice of Emblems*, the poet Geoffrey Whitney (born c. 1548) referred to the 'schola Aldelemensis', of which he had been a pupil.³² Schoolmasters are recorded at Audlem between 1592 and 1633,³³ but the school cannot have been especially notable. The terms of William Gamull's will, proved in 1635, imply that the school, for whose 'maintenance, erection, and continuance' the testator left £30, then lacked a permanent building.³⁴ The first large bequest was made in 1642 by Ralph Bolton, a London merchant, who left £466 13s. 4d. to the Merchant Taylors' Company of London on condition that they paid £20 a year towards the maintenance of Audlem free school; a sum which he then, in 1649, settled in trust to provide the master's salary.³⁵ Bolton's bequest was followed by the legacy of William Gamull's brother Thomas, a citizen and grocer of London, who left £500 to build a school-house and maintain a schoolmaster in Audlem. The money, which was entrusted to William Dod, William Massie, and Mr. Hassall, was to be managed by six 'custodes or governors', who had power to appoint and dismiss the master.³⁶ In 1644, however, it was borrowed by Parliament for use 'in the public service', provision being made for its repayment out of the estates of delinquents in Audlem parish or from parliamentary allowances. The loan was not repaid until 1652, when the principal had increased through interest to £802.³⁷

Work began on the new school-house between 1646 and 1648, but then stopped for four years, perhaps because of difficulties in obtaining Gamull's legacy. Building was resumed in 1652 and the work was complete by 1655. By then the trustees had received £962 9s. 9d., which they spent on the building and the purchase of a rent-charge of £20 a year on a property

¹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/10, f. 15v.

¹⁷ Ibid. EDP 1/5; EDV 1/93, f. 11; EDV 2/12, f. 28; EDV 2/24, f. 11; EDV 2/35, f. 24; EDV 2/37, ff. 31, 31v.; EDV 2/55, f. 32v.; EDV 2/69; EDV 7/1/54.

¹⁸ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* vol. xvii [3966–XVI], pp. 15–17, H.C. (1867–8), xxviii (14); *Morris's Dir. Ches.* (1864), 83.

¹⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/12.

²⁰ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 81.

²¹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/7/23.

²² *31st Rep. Com. Char. HC.* 103, pp. 621–2 (1837–8), xxiv.

²³ Minute bk. 1662–1885, 44.

²⁴ Ibid. 45–6.

²⁵ Financial accts. of the period appear in notes in the Acton burial reg. 1751–1812.

²⁶ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii, 15–17.

²⁷ Minute bk. of Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch., 1885–1913, p. 2; E. Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 19–24; Char. Com. Files, 525965 (Scheme of 19 May 1885).

²⁸ Minute bk. 1885–1913, pp. 1, 5; acct. bk. of Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch. 26 Mar. 1886; *Crewe and Nantwich Chronicle*, 1 Aug. 1885.

²⁹ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 20; Minute bk. 1885–1913, pp. 13, 18–19.

³⁰ Ches. R.O., SL 254/1/3, p. 1508; SL 254/1/4, 1953/116–17; Char. Com. files, 525965 (Scheme of 1957).

³¹ Thanks are due to Mr. B. C. Redwood for help in the preparation of this account, and to Mr. J. H. Edleston for permission to see the school building. Records, accounts, and plans for the foundation and building of the school survive in exceptional detail, and are kept at Ches. R.O. (SL 1/1–167).

³² D.N.B.; Whitney, *Choice of Emblems* (Leiden, 1586), 172.

³³ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 250.

³⁴ Ches. R.O., will of Wm. Gamull, 1635.

³⁵ B. C. Redwood, 'Audlem Free Grammar Sch.' J.C.A.S. li, 34.

³⁶ Ibid. 32.

³⁷ Ibid. 32–3; 3 *Sheaf*, iii, pp. 24–5; 2 *Sheaf*, i, pp. 95–6.

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in Newhall. The master and usher were thus provided with a fixed income of £40 a year.³⁸

Both founders attempted to regulate the character of their foundation. In 1649 Bolton stipulated that the master was to be a graduate and single,³⁹ and forbade him to take more than 30 pupils who were not children of Audlem inhabitants without the consent of the trustees. Gamull, in his will, required the master to teach English and Latin free of charge to the youth of Audlem.⁴⁰ In 1655 more detailed rules were drawn up. The master, who was to be a graduate, learned in Greek and Latin, was to employ an assistant, to teach all the children of the parish free. He and his pupils were to begin and conclude the school day with psalms, prayers, and readings in English from the scriptures. The curriculum was to include religious instruction for at least one hour a week in winter and daily in summer. An additional schedule provided that 20 youths living in the parish were to be nominated by Gamull's six trustees for up to two years' free instruction in writing, arithmetic, and mensuration. All other boys were to pay 5s. a quarter for writing and 7s. 6d. for arithmetic and mensuration.⁴¹

The completion of the new school was accompanied by the appointment of a new master, David Pierce,⁴² and an usher, Hugh Hassall, who appears to have preceded Pierce temporarily in the mastership.⁴³ It was, however, only during Thomas Colton's long tenure of the post (1659–81) that the new foundation began regularly to send pupils to university.⁴⁴ The school's academic record declined after his death, but it retained some links with the universities. Colton's successors, Caleb Pott and Alexander Scott, were Cambridge graduates,⁴⁵ and Cambridge maintained its hold on the mastership throughout the 18th century.⁴⁶ Pupils continued occasionally to go from Audlem to university, especially under William Evans (1698–1734) and his immediate successors.⁴⁷ The school retained its classical tradition; in 1791 Walthall Gretton was appointed to teach the parish boys English, Latin, and Greek free of charge. The more practical aspects of the curriculum continued to be important, and Gretton was also required to provide free instruction for 20 boys in writing, arithmetic, and mensuration.⁴⁸ By then, however, the school had a low reputation among the local gentry. The 1st Lord Combermere, who was at Audlem from 1781 to 1784, regretted that he had been sent there and regarded the then master as inefficient.⁴⁹

In the 1830s the master, George Bewsher, taught classics and English grammar to 20 parish boys and three boarders. The pupils were divided into three classes, gentlemen, yeomen, and smaller tradesmen, who paid entrance fees graduated according to rank,

though no tradesmen's sons then attended. For any further tuition additional charges were made, again according to rank. Few free boys were taught Latin and Greek, but they were taught the additional subjects at lower rates.⁵⁰

Between 1856 and 1866 the grammar school, hitherto under the mastership of John Prior,⁵¹ was replaced by a National elementary school under Jesse Fernley.⁵² In 1866 the Taunton Commissioners reported that the restored school contained 11 pupils, mostly under 14 years of age, all the sons of gentlemen and farmers. There were very few free pupils and no boarders. Fees were 8 guineas a year and the curriculum included Greek, Latin, algebra and Euclid, French, German, and drawing.⁵³ The grammar school continued to function until 1908 under a succession of university-educated masters.⁵⁴ An intense rivalry between its pupils and those of Fernley's National school grew up during the mastership of Dr. Poggi (1871–81).⁵⁵

The school's income from its originally considerable endowments remained at £40 a year throughout its existence.⁵⁶ The only substantial addition was a new master's house, built c. 1770 and capable of receiving 20 boarders,⁵⁷ the product of a charity established by William Evans, a former master.⁵⁸ The decline in the real value of the school's income made it increasingly dependent on external aid. In 1866 it was still governed by the two bodies set up by the co-founders: Bolton's nine trustees owned the premises and received part of the income, Gamull's six feoffees managed the school, and the two boards jointly appointed the master.⁵⁹ By a Scheme of 1887, however, the school's endowments passed into the hands of the Charity Commissioners,⁶⁰ and in 1895 the county council was empowered to send representatives to the governing body.⁶¹ The change enabled the school to obtain a county council grant in 1900, and a further grant for the construction of a new chemistry laboratory, c. 1904.⁶² Nevertheless, in 1908 the Board of Education declined to recognize Audlem as a secondary school, and in consequence the county council withdrew its support. The master resigned and the governors decided to close the school, which then had 36 pupils. In 1910 its property was vested in the county council, which was empowered to use the buildings as a public elementary school for the children of Audlem parish. The income of the new foundation, known as the Audlem Exhibition Foundation, was used to maintain the buildings, and to provide Audlem children with exhibitions to public secondary schools in Cheshire and grants for instruction in practical and technical subjects.⁶³ In 1973 a new scheme was devised under which the funds were to be used to support schools in

³⁸ J.C.A.S. li. 34.

³⁹ The latter requirement was dropped by his heir William Bolton in 1673: Ches. R.O., SL 1/2–3.

⁴⁰ J.C.A.S. li. 32.

⁴¹ Ibid. 47–9.

⁴² Ches. R.O., SL 1/7.

⁴³ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 70, 250; J.C.A.S. li. 49.

⁴⁴ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 116, 250, 360.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 250–1; *Alumni Cantab. to 1751*, iii. 384.

⁴⁶ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 180–1.

⁴⁷ 4 *Sheaf*, vi, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Ches. R.O., EDP 17/5.

⁴⁹ Mary, Viscountess Combermere & W. W. Knollys, *Memoirs & Correspondence of Field-Marshal Viscount Combermere*, 25–6; D.N.B.

⁵⁰ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 625–8.

⁵¹ Slater's *Dir. Ches.* (1855), 10.

⁵² Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* iii. 469.

⁵³ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 18–20.

⁵⁴ Slater's *Dir. Ches.* (1890), 42; Kelly's *Dir. Ches.* (1892), 37; *ibid.* (1896), 42.

⁵⁵ M. Burton, *19th-Cent. Audlem*, 16–17.

⁵⁶ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 208; *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 18–19.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 18.

⁵⁸ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 627–8.

⁵⁹ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 18; J.C.A.S. li. 47.

⁶⁰ Kelly's *Dir. Ches.* (1892), 37; J.C.A.S. li. 53.

⁶¹ Ches. R.O., HDT 302 (Scheme of 1895).

⁶² Ibid. S.F. Audlem (newspaper cutting of 1908); SL 300/13/13.

⁶³ Char. Com. files, no. 525810 (Scheme of 1910).

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the Audlem area and to provide exhibitions and grants for educational purposes to residents of Audlem under 25 years of age.⁶⁴

The old school of 1655 was a large building of brick with stone dressings which included a hall with library above and at the east end a three-storeyed master's house.⁶⁵ It remained intact in 1978, except for the raising of the hall ceiling, together with the master's house, added c. 1770, the chemistry laboratory, and some classrooms built before 1908. The council secondary school, which occupied the buildings from 1913,⁶⁶ was closed in 1965⁶⁷ and the property sold in 1972.⁶⁸

BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

THE school⁶⁹ was founded in 1860 as a private company entitled Birkenhead Proprietary School Limited. The prime movers were Sir William Jackson, R. Derbyshire, and J. Halsall Segar, who sought to attract shareholders by offering them a reduction in school fees. The 2nd marquess of Westminster was nominated president, and Sir William Jackson offered an annual scholarship of £20.⁷⁰ As first headmaster the managers appointed the Revd. J. T. Pearse, a Cambridge graduate and former sixth-form master at Sherborne, and the school opened in August 1860 with thirteen pupils. The curriculum was based on that of the 'principal public schools' and included divinity, classics, mathematics, modern languages, and natural philosophy. There were two scholarships each remitting a year's fees, and four university exhibitions.⁷¹

Within four years there were 13 boarders, 72 day boys, and a staff of four. In 1866 a pupil first proceeded to Cambridge. By 1870, when numbers stood at 85, bonds were issued to pay for the rebuilding of the school on a new site, and with the opening of the new buildings in 1871 the original company was liquidated and fresh articles of association were drawn up for a new one, entitled Birkenhead School Limited. The school, which was to offer religious, classical, mathematical, scientific, and mercantile education, in conformity with the principles of the Church of England, continued to be governed according to those articles, as amended and renewed in 1921 and 1977.⁷²

By 1877 numbers had reached 153; the increase enabled the managers to carry out plans to build a boarding house and headmaster's residence, completed in 1878. In the following year, however, numbers began to fall, perhaps as the result of a decline in discipline.⁷³ When the headmaster retired in 1883 there were only 92 pupils. His successor, W. C. Wood, a strict disciplinarian, introduced a modern side and himself took a class in German. The number of pupils rose again, and continued to do so under the Revd. A.

Sloman, appointed in 1886; Sloman introduced a preparatory department in the school-house in 1889.⁷⁴ His pupils included F. E. Smith, later Lord Chancellor and earl of Birkenhead, and W. L. H. Duckworth, the anatomist who eventually became master of Jesus College, Cambridge.⁷⁵ In the 1890s, after reaching a peak of c. 160, numbers again began to decline, perhaps because of further relaxations in discipline, and when Sloman resigned in 1897 there were less than 100 pupils at the school, and only 2 boarders.⁷⁶

Sloman was succeeded by F. Griffin, the first lay headmaster, who enforced discipline, encouraged *esprit de corps*, and especially strengthened the teaching of the classics. By 1901 he was a member of the Headmaster's Conference,⁷⁷ and when he retired in 1921 numbers had risen from 95 to 355, necessitating the purchase of additional buildings.⁷⁸ Expansion continued under Griffin's successor R. K. Davis, who sought to broaden the curriculum, but with the economic depression of the 1920s the school, which possessed virtually no endowments, was soon in difficulties, since it was forced to charge relatively high fees and faced increasing competition from new state secondary schools nearby. With the arrival of a new headmaster, W. F. Bushell, in 1930 the governors reassessed their position. In 1935 they were accorded direct grant status. Henceforth a proportion of entrants came from local primary schools and the local authorities were represented on the governing body.⁷⁹ During the Second World War financial problems increased as numbers dropped because of the school's exposed position in an area suffering from enemy



BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL. *Quarterly gules and or, in the first quarter a lion passant argent, over all a crozier erect, crook to the sinister, surmounted by an open book, also argent, the pages inscribed with the words BEATI MUNDO CORDE in letters sable.* [Granted 1959]

action. Nevertheless under the provisions of the Education Act, 1944, the school retained its direct grant, and the government agreed to assist those successful in an open entrance examination. The local authority was also given the right to send a stated number of boys to the school; their selection was determined by a separate examination.⁸⁰ As a result academic performance improved and the sixth form increased greatly in size from 25 in the early 1930s to more than 200 by 1954. New buildings, including a science block, were added, and the number of pupils reached 800 by 1960.⁸¹

⁶⁴ Ibid. (Scheme of 1973).

⁶⁵ J.C.A.S. li. 35-41.

⁶⁶ Ches. R.O., HDT 302.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Sl. 14.

⁶⁸ Ibid. HDT 302 (auction catalogue).

⁶⁹ The help of the headmaster, Mr. J. A. Gwilliam, and bursar, Mr. A. F. Hill, is gratefully acknowledged. The sch.'s rec. are very scanty, partly because of the destruction of the early governors' minute bks. during the Second World War. The acct. therefore depends much upon reminiscences published by a former master, W. E. Woodhouse, entitled *One in Heart*.

⁷⁰ Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 1-2; sch. rec.

⁷¹ Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 2; Morris's *Dir. Ches.* (1864), advertisement.

⁷² Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 2-3; sch. rec.

⁷³ Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 4-5.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 9, 11-15.

⁷⁵ D.N.B.

⁷⁶ Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 14-16.

⁷⁷ Whitaker's *Almanack* (1901), 573.

⁷⁸ Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 26, 46, 119, 123.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 49, 59, 124, 126, 128, 130.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 131.

⁸¹ Ibid. 87, 97, 135.

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Although the direct grant came to an end in 1975, pupils continued to be assisted by the local authorities for a further two years. During the 1970s the school had an exceptionally large scientific side. In 1978 there were c. 200 children in the preparatory school, and more than 700 in the senior school, including a sixth form of over 200. An appeal was launched in that year to raise funds which would be applied to assisted places.⁸²

The school first occupied a building in Park Road North which had formerly housed a private academy.⁸³ The new buildings opened in 1871 are Tudor Gothic in style, and include a large two-storeyed hall, later subdivided. Other buildings in a similar style, including the boarding house, headmaster's house, and chapel, were added between 1878 and 1883.⁸⁴

BUNBURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A SCHOOL existed at Bunbury⁸⁵ in 1573 when Peter Bennett was named as master there,⁸⁶ but the earliest evidence of an endowment dates from 1594. In that year Thomas Aldersey, a citizen and haberdasher of London,⁸⁷ obtained letters patent, authorizing the establishment of a free school at Bunbury to be endowed by himself.⁸⁸ In 1595 he granted the rectory and tithes of Bunbury to maintain a preacher, free schoolmaster, and usher in the parish.⁸⁹ The tithes had been let on long leases which produced £130 a year for the charity, from which the master and usher were granted stipends of £20 and £10 respectively.⁹⁰

As governors of the revenues and possessions of his charity Aldersey appointed the master and four wardens of the Haberdashers' Company of London, and the preacher and schoolmaster of Bunbury. They were also granted the reversion of the leases.⁹¹ Aldersey himself retained the right to appoint the schoolmaster for his lifetime, after which it was to pass to the master and wardens of the company.⁹² In his will of 1596 he bequeathed to the Haberdashers the sum of £300, from the interest of which the company was to pay £8 a year for 'the well-ordering of church and school'.⁹³ He also purchased the old chantry-house to serve as a house for the master, and settled it and various other properties, including a cottage for the usher, upon the governors of the school for two thousand years at a quit rent.⁹⁴ Under the terms of a lease of part of the tithes in 1593 the upkeep of the school-house and associated buildings had been made the responsibility of Aldersey's nephew John and his successors.⁹⁵

Aldersey also drew up statutes in which he ruled that

the school was to be free to all children, priority being given to those born within Bunbury parish. Girls were to be admitted to the school, but were to be few and were to continue to the age of nine, or until they had learnt to read English. Admission fees were to be 12d., except for 'the poorer sort' who were to pay 4d. The masters were to teach the reading, writing, and penning of the English, Latin, and Greek tongues in both prose and verse. The choice of books was left to the master, but certain recommendations were made, including Caesar, Cicero, Terence, and Virgil. School was to begin with prayers and scripture readings, which were to be rendered into English from Greek and Latin. In the evening a further chapter from the Bible was to be read, prayers said, and a psalm sung. The master and usher were to catechize their pupils once a week.⁹⁶

The first master of Aldersey's school was John Glover, named in the patent as *pedagogus*. He was already teaching in 1578,⁹⁷ and continued as master of Bunbury until 1619.⁹⁸ A number of pupils attended Cambridge university in the earlier 17th century, including, probably, Edward Burghall, the puritan divine and author of *Providence Improved*. Burghall subsequently became usher (1622–32) and headmaster (1632–46) of his old school, until his appointment to the vicarage of Acton, and on his deprivation in 1662 he retired again to Bunbury, probably to teach there until his death c. 1665.⁹⁹

The school prospered during the Interregnum. John Bradshaw, the regicide and a former pupil, by will of 1654 charged his estate with £500 for increasing the wages paid to the schoolmaster and usher.¹ The Restoration, however, brought that prosperity to an end, with the confiscation of Bradshaw's legacy, and the school never fully recovered its former standing.² In the 1670s Robert Hoole, master 1665–1706, sent a number of pupils to Cambridge,³ but towards the end of his long mastership there were complaints about his growing incapacity.⁴ In a letter of 1705 defending Hoole's conduct Thomas Aldersey wrote that although he would be pleased to see the school restored to the flourishing condition of the 1650s, he doubted whether the decline of the last half-century could be arrested. The school, he believed, was losing ground because there were fewer gentry in the parish and many more schools in the neighbourhood.⁵ In the following year he reported that the school had only 36 pupils.⁶

Despite the school's decline Hoole himself had clearly prospered at Bunbury. In his will of 1706 he left his wife an annual income of 30s. and £80 in cash, and made a number of smaller bequests, including 12s.

⁸² Inf. from Mr. Gwilliam and Mr. Hill.

⁸³ Woodhouse, *One in Heart*, 1.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 2, 118.

⁸⁵ Thanks are due to the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers of London and the headmaster, Mr. E. T. Wright, for making available their rec. relating to the sch. Those at Bunbury sch. included a MS. history by William Bailey, a former headmaster, and a complete set of logbooks, starting in 1856. The Haberdashers' rec. include a book of charters and statutes relating to Aldersey's Charity, 1575–1861, which is now kept in the Guildhall Libr., London.

⁸⁶ 4 *Sheaf*, iv, p. 6.

⁸⁷ J. P. Rylands & F. C. Beazley, 'Monuments at Bunbury Ch., Ches.', *T.H.S.L.C.* lxix. 99–103.

⁸⁸ Ches. R.O., DAL/C/1.

⁸⁹ Aldersey Char. rec., Haberdashers' Hall.

⁹⁰ Aldersey Char. rec.; Ches. R.O., DAR/C/19.

⁹¹ Ibid., DAL/C/1; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 258.

⁹² Ches. R.O., DAR/C/19.

⁹³ *T.H.S.L.C.* lxix. 100–1.

⁹⁴ Ches. R.O., DAL/C/2.

⁹⁵ Aldersey Char. rec.

⁹⁶ Ches. R.O., P 40/16/1.

⁹⁷ 4 *Sheaf*, iv, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 254.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 362; *D.N.B.*

¹ 3 *Sheaf*, x, p. 66; *D.N.B.*

² 3 *Sheaf*, x, p. 101.

³ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 362, 254.

⁴ Ches. R.O., DAL/C/5.

⁵ Ibid., DAL/C/6.

⁶ Ibid., DAL/C/7.

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a year to the school.⁷ His successors were men of less substance. From the 1720s to the end of the century the school was in the hands of Joseph Fletcher and his son Thomas, neither of whom was wholly satisfactory.⁸ In 1775 Samuel Aldersey complained of the elder Fletcher, whose mastership was marred by a long dispute about repairs due to the school buildings, that he was 'very idle and negligent'.⁹ When his son took over, the school was described as 'duly attended but of no repute'.¹⁰ The new master was not a graduate and expressed himself unable to fit his pupils for university.¹¹ Despite having thus fallen away from the founder's intentions, the school continued to support both a master and an usher.¹² Their salaries, however, remained unchanged and were insufficient to attract well-qualified candidates. By 1804, indeed, the Haberdashers' company had accepted that fact and dispensed with the statutes which required the masters to give instruction in the classics.¹³

In 1823 the school was said to offer only 'a common education in reading, writing and arithmetic'. It was hoped that the recent appointment of a new master, John Martin, curate of Bunbury, would lead to an improvement in the school, which was by then divided into two independent establishments run by the master and usher. The subjects taught by the new master included the elements, the classics, geography, book-keeping, and mensuration. Greek, Latin, and English grammar were free, but the additional subjects cost 7s. 6d. a quarter. The master's school then contained 40 boys of whom fifteen studied the classics. The usher's establishment, which contained only seven boys and four girls, was in decline and only reading and spelling were taught.¹⁴

In 1834 when the master and four wardens of the Haberdashers visited the school after complaints that the headmaster was negligent, they rejected the criticism but noted that the school was still partitioned.¹⁵ In the same year Martin appointed William Speed as his assistant, only reserving for himself the classical teaching, of which there had been none in the immediately preceding years. Speed was allowed the master's house and garden and £10 a year from the master's salary. In 1836 he had 55 children on the foundation, to whom he was teaching English grammar and reading free of charge, and a further 73 who were wholly fee-paying. By 1837, according to the Charity Commissioners, the school had almost entirely lost its grammar school character.¹⁶

By the mid 19th century the school was in decay. Speed had been succeeded by William Spencer, who was also parish clerk and innkeeper.¹⁷ Martin, though master, never went to the school, and Spencer drew a salary of £40 a year for educating about ten farmers' sons in very inadequate conditions. In 1856, however, as a result of the efforts of W. B. Garnett-Botfield, who

became preacher of Bunbury in 1853, the school was completely transformed. William Bailey, a certificated teacher, was appointed as usher, to direct the school. In 1861 he formally replaced Martin as master, and the number of pupils rose to about a hundred.¹⁸ Although an endowed school Bunbury was henceforth run on National Society lines. It provided basic instruction in the elements, and some Latin, Euclid, algebra, mensuration, and surveying; but those who wanted a fully classical education had to proceed to a higher school.¹⁹ In 1867 the Taunton Commission reported very favourably on the school, which was described as 'National . . . rising into . . . middle class'. There were then 110 pupils, including 6 boarders, mostly between nine and fourteen years old, and with few exceptions the sons of farmers or farm labourers. Fees ranged from 2d. a week to 15s. a quarter. Few attempted the higher subjects and only six had mastered the rudiments of Latin. The inspector considered that the intentions of the founder were being substantially executed, although girls were excluded and there was no usher. The income of the school, which had risen only to £50 a year, did not, however, permit a more ambitious scheme, and could not be expected to increase significantly over the next two centuries, until the lease of the rectory and tithes fell in.²⁰

Under Bailey's mastership (1861-1902) the school continued to be known as Bunbury Grammar School.²¹ In 1903, however, as a result of the 1902 Education Act, the maintenance of the school devolved upon Cheshire county council and school fees were abolished.²² In 1906 the school was officially re-entitled Bunbury Aldersey Church of England School.²³ By a Scheme of 1935 it was recognized as a public elementary school and the governors were empowered to continue to manage the endowments subject to certain restrictions. They were to provide £200 to improve the school premises and a further £30 a year towards the maintenance of the school. The residue was to be used for the education or physical and social training of poor children by providing maintenance grants or by other means.²⁴

The master's house given by Aldersey in 1595, a two-storeyed, timber-framed building dating from the early 16th century, belonged to the Aldersey Charity until 1964, when it was sold and converted into a dwelling-house.²⁵ The master, however, had not used it for a century, having moved in 1864 to a new house on Bunbury Heath.²⁶ The original school, built by Aldersey, stood beside the chantry-house in the valley below the church.²⁷ In 1812 it was replaced by a new structure, built by Samuel Aldersey, and later criticized by Garnett-Botfield as 'a very inferior room'.²⁸ It was considerably altered in 1856, and in 1874 a new school, designed by Douglas, was built next to the master's house on Bunbury Heath, the cost being met

⁷ T.H.S.L.C. lxix. 89; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 102-3.

⁸ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/21, 37; DAL/C/21, 23; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 181.

⁹ Ches. R.O., DAL/C/12-20.

¹⁰ Ibid., EDV 7/1/61.

¹¹ Ibid., DAL/C/21.

¹² Ibid., EDV 7/1/61.

¹³ Ibid., EDV 7/3/81.

¹⁴ 10th Rep. Com. Char., H.C. 103, pp. 193-5 (1824), xiii.

¹⁵ W. Bailey, 'Notes on the Aldersey Grammar Sch. Bunbury, Ches.', 2-vol. MS. 1905, pp. 17-22.

¹⁶ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 598.

¹⁷ Bailey, 'Notes', pp. 30, 200.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 31.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 47-8.

²⁰ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 21-7.

²¹ Bunbury Grammar Sch. logbk.

²² Bailey, 'Notes', pp. 208-9.

²³ Bunbury Grammar Sch. logbk.

²⁴ Char. Com. files.

²⁵ Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 121; additional inf. supplied by Mr. Wright.

²⁶ Bailey, 'Notes', pp. 70-2.

²⁷ Aldersey Char. rec.; 3 *Sheaf*, xv, p. 22.

²⁸ Bailey, 'Notes', pp. 30-1.

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by public subscription.²⁹ The building, which was still in use in 1976, is in a Tudor style.³⁰

CALDAY GRANGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, WEST KIRBY

ALTHOUGH there were masters³¹ in West Kirby by 1611,³² a school there was endowed only in 1636, when William Glegg, lord of the manor of Grange, gave 15 Cheshire acres to support a schoolmaster to teach grammar in Calday Grange township. The master was to be appointed in the first instance by Glegg himself, and after his death by his heirs, together with the bishop of Chester and the churchwardens of West Kirby.³³ Glegg's bequest made no provision for a school-house or its upkeep but a building was subsequently paid for by local subscription, the upkeep being the churchwardens' responsibility.³⁴

In 1660, when at least twelve of the original feoffees were dead, Edward Glegg drew up a fresh foundation deed which sought to confine the appointment of new masters to the heirs of William Glegg alone; he also tried to secure a promise from the trustees that they would manage the estate with his advice and consent.³⁵ His interference in the school's affairs resulted in a succession of 10 masters over a period of 20 years. After a quarrel between Glegg on the one hand and the master and feoffees on the other, a new deed drawn up in 1688 omitted the innovations of 1660.³⁶

In 1677 £30 a year was devised to the schoolmaster by the will of Thomas Bennett, to be paid from his estate called the Newhouse. The school benefited from the will only after an Act of Parliament had been obtained in 1700.³⁷ In the 18th century the income from the Glegg endowment rose, to reach 20 guineas a year by 1789; by that time the master's salary, augmented by Bennett's gift, was more than £50.³⁸

Little is known of the conduct of the school in the late 17th and early 18th century; most of the masters are shadowy figures.³⁹ In the late 1730s the master nominated by William Glegg was said to be unable to teach grammar, ignorant of Latin, and an absentee; the master, Richard Jebb, in turn accused the trustees of Bennett's charity of misappropriating its funds.⁴⁰ Shortly afterwards a dispute arose between the bishop of Chester and the churchwardens over the suitability of another candidate for the mastership.⁴¹ By the late 18th century the school, under non-graduate masters, was no longer fully classical. The poor boys were taught reading and spelling, and though Greek, Latin, and mathematics remained on the curriculum, more attention was paid to elementary and commercial subjects. Religious instruction, consisting of Bible

reading and the catechism, was also provided, and the school opened and closed each day with the Lord's Prayer and one of the collects.⁴² In the early 19th century girls attended the school, a sign that it then had merely parish-school status.⁴³ It declined under an incompetent master between 1829 and 1861; the Charity Commission's inspector reported unfavourably on it in 1837, and by 1861 it had only about 6 pupils, compared with 80 in 1825.⁴⁴

Between 1861 and 1864 the school was closed while a new school-house was built with money given by J. S. Leigh. A Scheme of 1864 converted the foundation into an elementary school, although the curriculum was to include Latin if required. The school, which was to be known as West Kirby endowed school, was to be open to boys from West Kirby at low fees and to boys from other parishes who paid more.⁴⁵ A proposal for an upper form found little support, and in 1867 the school was described as merely a mixed National school, with few pupils staying beyond the age of twelve. Meanwhile its income increased steadily, from £56 in 1837 to £70 in 1867 and £90 in 1884.⁴⁶

In 1886 the school was reconstituted as a grammar school under a new Scheme. The governing body represented the bishop of Chester, Liverpool university college, and the ratepayers, incumbents, and churchwardens of West Kirby, Hoylake, and Frankby. The school was to be for boys aged between 8 and 16, preferably from West Kirby ancient parish; boarders were also to be accommodated. The curriculum was to include the elements, geography, history, English grammar, composition, and literature, mathematics, Latin, at least one modern foreign language, natural science, drawing, drill, and singing. In return for half the annual income from Bennett's charity ten scholarships were to be awarded to boys from elementary schools in West Kirby, Hoylake, and Frankby parishes. Further free places for up to 10 per cent of the total number of pupils were to be provided. The governors were to provide a new elementary school for the three parishes, and when its cost had been met they were to establish three exhibitions tenable at places of higher education.⁴⁷

Financial difficulties prevented the new foundation from prospering. The number of pupils fell from 47 in 1887 to less than 30 by 1891.⁴⁸ An inspector from the Charity Commission visited the school in 1892 and criticized the 'miserably inadequate salaries' of the staff; he also recommended the building of a new chemistry laboratory and a master's house with accommodation for twelve boarders.⁴⁹ The recommendation could only be carried out in 1896 after the county council, in return for representation on the governing body, made a grant of £450 and began to

²⁹ Ibid. pp. 29 v., 72 sqq.

³⁰ Ches. R.O., SC 1/34.

³¹ Thanks are due to the headmaster, the Revd. K. S. W. Walker, and his staff for their help with the preparation of this acct.

³² Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 148, 283.

³³ Hist. Calday Grange Grammar Sch. ed. M. J. Protheroe, 11-14.

³⁴ Ches. R.O., EDP 290/11; Calday Grange Sch. 22.

³⁵ Calday Grange Sch. 10.

³⁶ Ibid. 11; Ches. R.O., EDP 290/11; C. D. Brown, *Deeds and Doc. concerning Calday Grange Sch.* 6-7.

³⁷ Brown, *Deeds and Doc.* 12-13.

³⁸ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 179; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/2/36.

³⁹ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 284; Calday Grange Sch.

23.

⁴⁰ P.R.O., CHES, 15/137; Brown, *Deeds and Doc.* 14-19.

⁴¹ Ches. R.O., EDP 290/11; Calday Grange Sch. 25; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 99.

⁴² Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/40; EDP 290/11; Brown, *Deeds and Doc.* 20; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 473.

⁴³ Brown, *Deeds and Doc.* 20-1.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 21; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 472-3; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/7/526.

⁴⁵ P.R.O., ED 27/236.

⁴⁶ Calday Grange Sch. 32-3, 36; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 473; *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 101.

⁴⁷ Ches. R.O., P46/15/1; Wallasey Town Hall rec., box 324A.

⁴⁸ Calday Grange Sch. 41-3.

⁴⁹ P.R.O., ED 27/241.

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pay annual maintenance grants. Payments were also received from the Department of Science and Art.⁵⁰ Meanwhile the number of pupils increased, reaching 119 by 1899; further improvements in accommodation included a gymnasium built in 1898 and new classrooms in 1902. The school's finances became overstrained and in return for further substantial aid from the county a new governing body was established in 1905, with 9 of the 15 representative governors nominated by the county council and 4 by Hoylake and West Kirby U.D.C. Fees for day pupils were raised.⁵¹ After an inspection by the Board of Education in 1907 the headmaster's independent management of the boarding house was discontinued and his salary substantially increased.⁵²

By 1913 the school contained 177 pupils and the need for additional buildings had become imperative. In 1914 the governors, unable to meet the need from the very small endowment income, offered to transfer the school to the county council, and in 1916 it became a fully maintained school. The council's representation on the governing body was increased to ten. The school continued to take both day pupils and boarders. The endowment income was administered as the William Glegg Foundation. The ten Bennett scholarships were retained for the benefit of boys attending elementary schools in West Kirby, and provision was made for maintenance allowances for Bennett scholars and leaving exhibitions for boys who had attended the school for at least two years. Any surplus income from the foundation was to be applied to the school.⁵³

While the changes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were taking place the headmaster was W. A. Hollowell, who held the post from 1891 to 1920. The school's academic record steadily improved; by 1900 pupils were winning scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge.⁵⁴ Under Hollowell's successor the school expanded considerably. In the late 1920s the number of pupils rose to c. 360, necessitating a new block of buildings which was completed in 1928. In 1934 the boarding house was closed, and in 1944 the preparatory department was discontinued. In the 1940s and 1950s the school continued to expand; there were 420 pupils in 1949 and 800 in 1959. By 1976 the number had reached 1,150.⁵⁵

The school's expansion in the 20th century necessitated considerable modifications of the school buildings. The original school-house built in the earlier 17th century remained unaltered until 1861, when it became so dilapidated that the trustees decided to demolish it. A new sandstone building erected on the same site in 1862–3 was greatly extended at the end of the 19th century.⁵⁶ In 1928 the county completed a new block of buildings, including an art hall, a library, and twelve classrooms; a gymnasium was added in 1937. In 1964 the building of 1863 was demolished, the bell-turret alone remaining as a garden ornament, and a new block, consisting of assembly hall, science

building, gymnasium, and dining hall was added to that of 1928.⁵⁷

THE KING'S SCHOOL, CHESTER

THE school was founded with the diocese of Chester in 1541.⁵⁸ The cathedral statutes of c. 1544 provided for a master and an usher to teach Latin and Greek to twenty-four 'poor and friendless boys' aged between nine and fifteen. Eight choristers were also to attend the school, but to be taught music by another master. The teachers and pupils were to be nominated by the dean and chapter, and the headmaster was to hold a minor canonry. He and his school were required to be present in the choir on holy days and to attend high mass whenever it was celebrated. They were all to eat together in the common hall, an allowance being provided for their maintenance.⁵⁹ The headmaster received a yearly salary of £16 13s. 4d., his usher £8, and the boys £3 6s. 8d., those who were both King's scholars and choristers being paid a double allowance.⁶⁰

The school opened in 1541 with a full complement of King's scholars and choristers. Its original location is unknown, but in the 1570s it was housed briefly in the former monastic refectory. By then, however, it was in some difficulty, for at the archbishop of York's visitation in 1578 the headmaster, Thomas Purvis, stated that the refectory was abandoned and ruinous and his own house in need of repair.⁶¹ In the same year he and his usher were accused of failing in their duty properly to bring up the youth of the area, but the matter cannot have been very serious, for in 1584 Sir Francis Walsingham recommended a poor boy to the dean, in the expectation that he would be prepared for university at 'so good a grammar school'.⁶²

Throughout the later 16th century and early 17th the school remained without a proper home. After a period in a house in Abbey Square it removed to St. Nicholas's chapel and afterwards, temporarily, to St. Oswald's church in the south transept of the cathedral; in 1613 it was established once more in the refectory.⁶³ Such upheavals may have been unsettling. In his visitation of 1623 the bishop of Chester found it necessary to require the removal of 'indocible' pupils and to remind the dean and chapter that the sons of the rich were not to be made King's scholars.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, pupils of the school continued to go up to the universities in the 1620s and 1630s.⁶⁵

The Civil War brought changes, but did not disrupt the school. With the abolition of the cathedral establishment the right to appoint and dismiss masters and to regulate salaries was vested in the mayor, aldermen, sheriffs, and common council of the city of Chester, and the salaries were administered by the committee for the relief of plundered ministers. The chapter's sequestered revenues were drawn upon to increase the

⁵⁰ Ches. R.O., SL 300/13/11, 13.

⁵¹ *Calday Grange Sch.* 46–9; Wallasey Town Hall rec., box 324A.

⁵² *Calday Grange Sch.* 53–6.

⁵³ Char. Com. file no. 526022.

⁵⁴ *Calday Grange Sch.* 57–66.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 76–87, 105, 117, 133; inf. supplied by the headmaster.

⁵⁶ *Calday Grange Sch.* 22, 30–1, 48.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 79–80, 86–7, 117–18.

⁵⁸ Thanks are due to Mr. A. St. G. Walsh for his help in the

preparation of this account.

⁵⁹ Rymer, *Foedera*, xiv. 717–24; Ches. R.O., EC/1736/78.

⁶⁰ R. V. H. Burne, *Chester Cath.* 10; Chester cath. rec., treasurers' accts.

⁶¹ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 10–12; Chester cath. rec., treasurers' accts.

⁶² Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 148; 1 *Sheaf*, iii, p. 113.

⁶³ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 121–3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 100.

⁶⁵ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 363.

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salaries of the master and usher, and in 1648 the master, John Greenhalgh, was given a house belonging to the dean and chapter to replace his own house which had been destroyed in the war. The masters, however, did not always find it easy to obtain their salaries and were forced to petition the committee for the payment of arrears.⁶⁶ In 1656 the city authorities dismissed Greenhalgh after complaints of his misdeemeanours; the new master, William Liptrott, retained his position until 1668, long after the restoration of the chapter.⁶⁷

Under Greenhalgh and Liptrott and their successors a steady stream of pupils was sent to the universities.⁶⁸ Nevertheless the bishops felt that the statutes were not being observed. In 1675 Bishop Pearson enjoined that the age limits be maintained and unfit pupils removed.⁶⁹ In 1692 Bishop Stratford lamented that the visitation of the school had been neglected, and that as a result there had recently been complaints that the statutes were not properly kept. Henceforth the school was to be visited twice a year by the dean and chapter and the ages and capacities of the pupils carefully investigated.⁷⁰ In 1698 he further required that scholars nominated by the dean or any of the prebendaries be formally approved by the chapter.⁷¹

By 1709 there were 50 pupils under the headmaster and 70 under the usher; most of them were fee payers.⁷² The masters who were licensed to instruct boys in good letters and to expound Greek and Latin authors,⁷³ sent many pupils to the universities, and the school enjoyed an especially high reputation under Charles Henchman, headmaster from 1714 to 1741.⁷⁴ In the mid 1750s, however, the dean and chapter found it necessary to regulate the foundationers' fees after complaints that the headmaster had been overcharging his pupils, and to control the conduct of the school in other ways; the usher was required to read prayers at the beginning and end of the day, and to teach the boys elementary Latin grammar. In 1757 the master, who had been admonished for neglecting the school for several months, resigned.⁷⁵ Despite the difficulties, however, private boarders remained a lucrative source of income; they were taught in a separate building, while foundationers remained in the refectory.⁷⁶

Under Thomas Bolland at the end of the 18th century the school gained a certain reputation. Its pupils included the antiquary George Ormerod.⁷⁷ The boys occasionally performed plays, and published a collection of Greek, Latin, and English exercises under the title *Prolusiones Poeticae*, written partly by themselves and partly by Bolland. In the early 19th century, however, the school changed in character, though it continued to produce distinguished pupils such as the antiquary James Markland.⁷⁸ By a regulation of 1814

the headmaster's salary was increased on condition that he take sole control of the foundationers and that the number of private pupils be restricted to six. By that time the school had become 'appropriated to the education of the lower orders' and the classics were no longer taught.⁷⁹

By the mid 19th century half the sum originally distributed among the 24 boys was reserved for 12 choristers. That arrangement had been adopted by the dean and chapter because the King's scholarships had attracted pupils ill suited to a classical education, and middle-class boys were deterred from attending. The bishop, however, as visitor advised the chapter to return to the original arrangements and in 1850 a separate school was founded for the choristers. Despite the reform the school's condition caused discontent in the city; the master was expected to provide his own accommodation and to pay his usher's salary; no provision was made for King's scholars when they left school, whereas the choristers each received sums of money.⁸⁰ In 1852 the city authorities alleged that the dean and chapter had failed to adhere to the statutes; further complaints were made in 1857.⁸¹ Ten years later the Taunton Commission's inspector assessed the school as merely third-grade. Although most of the 70 pupils learned Latin, only 7 studied Greek; French was an extra subject. Few boys were more than 14 years old, and none had gone to university in the previous five years. There were no boarders. Although the refectory was a good room, the desks were old. Additional classrooms were needed. There were no houses for the master or usher, and no playground.⁸² In the same year the Chester Association of Old King's Scholars complained about the state of the school, and in particular about the failure to comply with the provision in the foundation statutes requiring four scholars to be maintained at university. Since the chapter's surplus income was vested in the Ecclesiastical Commission, the Association felt that the exhibitions should be restored.⁸³ The complaint produced no result and in 1870 the Association itself raised more than £600 to endow a scholarship.⁸⁴

In 1873 a Scheme for the management of the school was drawn up after prolonged negotiations between the dean and chapter, the Endowed Schools Commission, and various local charities.⁸⁵ A new governing body replaced the dean and chapter; it included the bishop, dean, and mayor of Chester and the canon in residence as *ex officio* members, and representatives of the dean and chapter, the city council, and local charities. The dean and chapter were released from their statutory obligations in return for an annual payment of £280. The headmaster was to be appointed by the governors. The school was divided into junior and senior departments. The curriculum

⁶⁶ *Minutes of Cttee. for Relief of Plundered Ministers* (R.S.L.C. xxviii), 194-5, 217; (ibid. xxxiv), 32, 83-4, 164, 184, 192-3, 237-8; C. D. Rogers, 'Educ. in Lanes. and Ches. 1640-60', *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiii, 41-2; Chester City R.O., AB/2, ff. 78 and v., 131v.

⁶⁷ Chester City R.O., AB/2, ff. 110v.-111, 115; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 257.

⁶⁸ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 363-4.

⁶⁹ Ches. R.O., EDA 2/3, f. 74 and v.

⁷⁰ Ibid. ff. 180v., 183v.

⁷¹ Ibid. f. 239.

⁷² Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 59, 100.

⁷³ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/12.

⁷⁴ 3 *Sheaf*, vi, pp. 25, 27, 28; Burne, *Chester Cath.* 191.

⁷⁵ Burne, *Chester Cath.* 208-9.

⁷⁶ 3 *Sheaf*, xiii, pp. 24-5; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 100; Chester City R.O., CR 65/9, 19, 27.

⁷⁷ *D.N.B.*

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* i, 366; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 410-11; J. H. Hanshall, *The Stranger in Chester*, 144-5.

⁸⁰ Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/6-10; *Cath. Com. App.* [1822], pp. 134-5, H.C. (1854), xxv.

⁸¹ Ches. R.O., EDA 11/11; EDD 7/7/6-10.

⁸² *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii, 30-1.

⁸³ Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/12-13.

⁸⁴ P.R.O., ED 27/206.

⁸⁵ e.g. Ibid. ED 27/207.

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throughout was to include English grammar, composition, and literature, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, history, geography, Latin, at least one modern European language, and one branch of natural science. The senior department, for boys aged between 15 and 19, was also to study Greek, higher mathematics, and further natural science. Fees for entrance, tuition, and board were laid down; they could be reduced for choristers, who were once more to be educated at the school. There were to be at least twelve foundation scholarships and at least one leaver's exhibition; in addition further exhibitions at the school were to be provided by Owen Jones's charity.⁸⁶

During the following twenty years the school faced increasing financial problems. New buildings erected between 1875 and 1879 cost far more than the original estimates, and in spite of contributions from charities and from the Ecclesiastical Commission more than £2,500 was still owed in 1888.⁸⁷ High fees were blamed for a decline in the number of pupils, but although the scales were revised in 1888 numbers dropped from about 200 in 1886 to 106 in 1889 and 95 in 1892. The choristers were again withdrawn from the school in 1888.⁸⁸

In 1895 a new Scheme gave the county and city council representation on the governing body. The headmaster was to be Anglican and a graduate, but not necessarily in holy orders, and drawing, drill, and vocal music were added to the curriculum. Up to four cathedral choristers and ex-choristers were to be educated at half fees, and there were to be between 12 and 24 wholly exempt foundationers.⁸⁹ Further arrangements in 1895 increased the representation of the Robert Oldfield charity on the governing body in return for a larger financial contribution.⁹⁰ In 1897 the school raised a loan from the charity, repayable over 30 years, in order to discharge its debts; nevertheless its financial difficulties continued until the newly formed Board of Education made a grant to it.⁹¹

The Schemes of 1873 and 1895 brought into question the long-established right of the headmaster to occupy a stall in the cathedral. A succession of disputes between headmasters and the dean and chapter over that issue was only resolved in 1900 when the House of Lords decided that in effect a new school had been established by the Schemes, and that therefore the headmaster could no longer claim a stall.⁹²

By 1904 the Board of Education inspectors were able to report fairly favourably on the school. Individual tuition given to the boys in the upper forms had resulted in their gaining fourteen open scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge in the previous twelve years. The school contained 106 pupils, including 14 boarders. Most studied Latin, 12 Greek, and 17 German, and a few were studying commercial subjects. Nevertheless the school was understaffed and the standards reached by those who did not study the classics were rather low. The inspectors felt that there were too many free places, and criticized the closed

scholarships. They recommended that more boys should stay on beyond the age of sixteen.⁹³

Recognition of the King's School by the local education authorities was delayed until 1921, when the governing body was altered to allow at least one third of its members to be nominated by the city and county councils.⁹⁴ The school thereafter received substantial aid from the local authorities until 1945, when it was accorded direct grant status under the 1944 Education Act.⁹⁵

The number of pupils rose steadily in the early 20th century, reaching about 250 by the 1920s. In 1911 the governors obtained a lease of Arnold House to accommodate the junior and boarding departments. The latter continued until 1931, when, having only three inmates, it was closed.⁹⁶ In the 1930s and 1940s the school stagnated academically. The standard of Latin was low, and Greek disappeared altogether; pupils left at seventeen and open scholarships were no longer obtained. In 1949 the inspectors criticized the buildings as inadequate.⁹⁷ The governors had leased part of the Bluecoat Hospital in 1947 and bought Arnold House in 1948, but those measures were insufficient to accommodate more than 400 pupils adequately. Nevertheless new buildings were only completed in 1960; the school governors found it difficult to sell those erected in the 1870s because of restrictions imposed by the dean and chapter. The new school was erected on a site leased from the duke of Westminster some two miles south of Chester on the Wrexham road. The cost was met partly by gifts from local industries and the Industrial Fund, and an appeal was launched.⁹⁸

In the 1960s the school enjoyed close relations with the local authorities, which took more than 200 of the 500 available places. Improved standards, commended by government inspectors, were reflected in the increasing numbers of boys proceeding to university. The number of pupils, which had risen to 550 by 1970, was further increased by the absorption of the cathedral choir school in 1977. In 1976 with the abolition of the direct grant the King's School became fully independent.⁹⁹

The Neo-Gothic buildings erected in the 1870s to the designs of A. W. Blomfield were bought by Chester corporation in 1958. They stood at the west end of the cathedral. In 1979 they were used by a bank. The new school buildings were designed by D. H. Macmorran.

THE QUEEN'S SCHOOL, CHESTER

In 1877, under the influence of Dr. J. S. Howson, dean of Chester, a girls' high school¹ was founded in Chester to educate the daughters of the middle class. It was to be known as Chester Collegiate School and to be primarily an Anglican foundation, though pupils of other denominations were to be allowed to attend. Those who had attended the inaugural meetings

⁸⁶ Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/14.

⁸⁷ P.R.O., ED 27/209; 27/222; Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/16.

⁸⁸ P.R.O., ED 27/210; *Kelly's Dir. Ches.* (1892), 192; King's Sch., Chester, governors' rec., governors' minute bk.

⁸⁹ Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/16–17.

⁹⁰ Ibid. EDD 7/7/17.

⁹¹ P.R.O., ED 27/218; sch. governors' rec.

⁹² Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/19–21.

⁹³ Sch. governors' rec., inspectors' rep.

⁹⁴ Ibid. governors' minute bk.; Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/22.

⁹⁵ Sch. governors' rec., governors' minute bk.; sch. accts.

⁹⁶ Ibid. governors' minute bk.

⁹⁷ Ibid. inspectors' rep.; governors' minute bk.

⁹⁸ Ibid. governors' minute bk.; Ches. R.O., EDD 7/7/23.

⁹⁹ Sch. governors' rec.; inf. supplied by Mr. A. St. G. Walsh.

¹ This account is much indebted to a typescript hist. of the sch., kindly loaned by its author, Miss Gladys Phillips, and published in 1978. Thanks are also due to Miss Margaret Farra, headmistress of the Queen's School.

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formed a committee of management, and funds were raised by subscription. By 1878 a house in Watergate Street, then known as 100 Watergate Flats, had been leased for three years to house the new school, and the first headmistress was appointed. The school opened with seventeen pupils aged between eight and sixteen, who paid fees of £6–£10 a year. Its curriculum included English, history, geography, arithmetic, French, and music. The number of pupils rose quickly to 62, and two full-time mistresses were appointed by 1879. A year later there were more than 90 girls at the school. A new building was necessary, and in 1882 Hugh Lupus Grosvenor, 1st duke of Westminster, offered the site of the city gaol and £500. The school was renamed the Queen's School and a Scheme was prepared under the direction of the Charity Commission. A trust was formed, consisting of the members of the former committee of management and almost all the school's benefactors, but the effective governing body was to be a council, consisting of a secretary, a treasurer, and 24 governors.

The new buildings, designed by E. A. Ould in a debased Gothic style, and built of red brick with terracotta embellishments, were complete by 1882. They comprised a hall, five classrooms, and a music room, together with kitchens and accommodation for the staff. Local interest was stimulated, and by 1883 the number of pupils exceeded 125. In 1887, on the appointment of a new headmistress, the school was reorganized. New subjects were introduced, including mathematics and modern languages. A preparatory department was set up, and the Queen's scholarship founded to mark the Golden Jubilee. By 1888 pupils were proceeding to the universities, and in 1896 Miss Nessie Brown endowed a scholarship to Girton College, Cambridge. In the 1890s there were between 120 and 140 pupils, including about 30 boarders.² By 1894 the school had a credit balance of more than £500, and was receiving annual grants from the Oldfield charity. In 1897 the newly founded Hastings educational charity made available £2,500 to build a new wing for the school, which was by then becoming overcrowded, and the Owen Jones charity offered £2,000 for furnishings and equipment. The school no longer needed to solicit subscriptions.³

In 1900 a new Scheme replaced the former two-tier system of management by a governing body of sixteen, including the bishop of Chester *ex officio* and representatives of the dean and chapter, the county and city councils, and those local charities that had made gifts to the school. Fees for tuition and boarding were fixed, and the curriculum was to include the elements, religious instruction, geography, history, English, Latin, natural science, algebra, geometry, domestic economy, needlework, drawing, and music. In addition to the Jubilee scholarship there were to be ten scholarships at the disposal of the trustees of the two charities which had given most financial support to the school. The governors were to maintain two leaving exhibitions and to provide foundation scholarships if funds permitted.⁴

The new buildings completed in 1902 were large enough to accommodate 200 pupils. The effect of the new Scheme was seen in the presence by then of eight free scholars.⁵ In 1903 with the appointment of a

London graduate as headmistress there were further changes. The science teaching was reorganized and extended under a full-time member of staff and regular inspections were instituted by the Board of Education. The inspectors' first report contained significant strictures. Classes were congested, some of the teaching was below standard, the salaries were too low, and the provision for science was inadequate. To finance improvements, without which recognition could not be given, the inspectors recommended that fees be raised and grants sought from the city and county authorities.

The school found it difficult to follow the Board's advice. Both city and county councils refused to make grants while the school remained expressly Anglican, and the governors were forced to amend the religious clauses in their Scheme. In 1907, after proposals had been made that the headmistress should no longer be required to be an Anglican and that religious instruction should be in accordance with parents' wishes, the local authorities offered £4,000 towards a new science building. In 1909, however, the Board revealed that it had no power to sanction the proposed amendments and the matter was only settled in 1910 in the Court of Chancery.⁶ In 1911–12 the new building was erected.

By that time the school was in fresh difficulties. Costs were mounting, while the number of pupils fell from a peak of 177 in 1906 to 134 in 1912. The reasons for the decline lay partly in the alteration of the Scheme, and partly in the foundation of the City and County School for Girls, which provided a similar education at lower fees. By 1913 the school was nearly £4,000 in debt. The governors invited the city council to take it over, but the council preferred to make a further grant of £1,000; in return the school had to raise a further £1,000, make three more scholarships available to girls under twelve, and add further representatives of the education committee to the governing body. By the end of the year the money had been raised and the school preserved; economies included the reduction of the staff from twelve to nine and the removal of the boarders from private lodgings to new accommodation in the school. The school was out of debt by 1914 and numbers again began to rise, reaching 247 in 1925.

That increase rendered essential a further extension of the buildings, which had become very crowded. In 1931, Mrs. H. F. Brown bought 7 Stanley Place and leased it to the school as a preparatory department. A new building was opened in 1936 and to mark the occasion the school acquired arms. By 1939 pupils numbered more than 300, but accommodation remained inadequate, and once more the school had a large deficit. The local authorities intervened to insist on the supervision of its annual accounts and expenditure.

Under the 1944 Education Act the school became a direct grant school and half its places were made available to the local education authorities. An improvement in its accommodation was required, and in 1946 the junior department, then numbering 80, was moved to 57 Liverpool Road, a house purchased and leased to the school by Mrs. Brown. The lease was converted to a gift in 1949. The buildings were extended in 1954 and in 1961 an adjoining property

² P.R.O., ED 27/230, 231.

³ Ibid. ED 27/230.

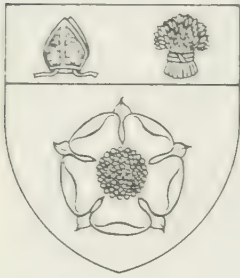
⁴ Ches. R.O., EDD 7/8/1–2.

⁵ P.R.O., ED 27/232.

⁶ Ches. R.O., EDD 7/8/3–6.

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was bought. Over the same period the preparatory department expanded, and in 1961 Mrs. Brown presented it with three adjoining properties in Stanley Place. The main school buildings were also enlarged and improved in the 1950s, and between 1958 and



THE QUEEN'S SCHOOL, CHES-
TER. Or, a rose gules, barbed and
seeded proper; on a chief azure, a
mitre and a garb of the field.

[Granted 1936]

1963 an appeal was launched to help meet the cost of further major extensions.

From 1958 to the mid 1970s the school constantly numbered about 600, with a steadily increasing sixth form from which in 1973 nearly 40 girls proceeded to universities. The abolition of the direct grant in 1976 was a severe blow; half the school's pupils were supported by the local authorities. Nevertheless it decided to become independent, and in 1977 an appeal was launched to raise funds to provide bursaries for girls whose parents could not afford the full cost of the fees.⁷

KNUTSFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THERE was a school at Knutsford at least from the reign of Henry VIII. A schoolmaster there sent a pupil to university in 1536,⁸ and a royal grant of 1549 referred to lands in Nether Knutsford, Sudlow, and Over Knutsford, entrusted 'of old time' to various local inhabitants for the maintenance of a schoolmaster to teach the children of the township and a priest to pray for 'all Christian souls'. The Crown stipulated that Sir John Legh of Rostherne, the recipient of the Knutsford lands, should continue to make provision for a schoolmaster. In 1549 the post was held by a Richard Oldfield, whom Sir John was bound to retain for the term of his life and to replace within six weeks of his death. Sir John and his heirs were to continue to nominate schoolmasters in the chapelry, as the need arose, and to pay them an annual salary of £5 6s. 8d. in two instalments.⁹ There is no record of the curriculum, nor of any school statutes; the latter, if they ever existed, were already unknown in 1789.¹⁰ It was, however, early accepted that the school was free to six poor scholars.¹¹

The Leghs apparently fulfilled their obligations. In 1563 a John Brook taught at Knutsford,¹² and a succession of graduate masters sent boys to the universities throughout the 17th century.¹³ The Leghs con-

tinued to exercise their right to appoint throughout the period; in 1691, for example, Peter Legh of Booths nominated Ralph Malbon as master.¹⁴ The school's endowments were augmented at that time, and by the early 18th century the master was receiving interest from £106 given by various persons, in addition to the stipend paid by the Leghs.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the masters probably thought their salary inadequate. In 1700 local notables reported that the new master, Thomas Spencer, had no encouragement 'to continue with us' until the inhabitants offered to increase his salary by voluntary subscription.¹⁶ By then the inhabitants of Nether Knutsford were clearly thought to have responsibilities towards the school; in 1741 it was declared that the school-house had been immemorably repaired by the constables at their expense.¹⁷

When in 1741 the chapelry of Nether Knutsford became the centre of a new parish, the grammar school which stood next to the old chapel was demolished. A new school was built in 1744,¹⁸ largely paid for out of monies which had been given to augment the master's salary. In lieu of the latter about six acres of waste land were inclosed and vested in the trustees, providing the master with £3 4s. a year. The Leghs retained their right of appointment with their obligation to provide £5 6s. 8d. annually.¹⁹

Although in the earlier 18th century the masters were all graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, after 1746 the school was run by a non-graduate, Joseph Foden.²⁰ In 1778 he and his assistant taught English, Latin, and accounts.²¹ On Foden's death in 1793 the curriculum became a matter of dispute. Mr. Legh insisted on appointing a Mr. Lewis, whom the notables of Knutsford considered to be unfit for his post, since he was unable to teach Latin and Greek, which, they argued, had always been taught, and ought to continue to be taught, in the school.²² In 1804 it was reported that, after a dispute over his bond of resignation, Lewis had been thrown into gaol by Legh, and that the school, which was 'very ill-supplied' by his son, a youth of seventeen, had few pupils.²³

In 1809 a new policy was adopted with the appointment of the Revd. Peter Vennett.²⁴ Although open to all boys of the parish, the school was free only to 6 foundation scholars, nominated at the age of 6 by Willoughby Legh of Booths. There were about 50 pupils of whom 40 were boarders, paying 35 guineas a year, and the system of education resembled that at Eton. Vennett received an annual salary of £150.²⁵

In 1856 the school was regulated by a new Scheme. New trustees were appointed, including the incumbent, churchwarden, and sidesman of Knutsford, the incumbent of Toft, and Peter Legh of Norbury Booths, who retained the right to appoint the master. The master was to receive the entire income from the school's endowments provided it did not exceed £150 a year, in which case the extra money was to be used to provide additional teachers. Boys were to pay fees not exceeding 25s. a quarter, except for six free found-

⁷ Inf. supplied by the headmistress.

⁸ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 267.

⁹ Ches. R.O., DLT B15, f. 144.

¹⁰ Ibid. EDV 7/2/84.

¹¹ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 345.

¹² 4 *Sheaf*, iv, p. 4.

¹³ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 267, 367.

¹⁴ Ches. R.O., EDP 164/9; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 345.

¹⁵ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 345.

¹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDP 164/9.

¹⁷ Ibid. P 7/14/3.

¹⁸ Lysons, *Mag. Brit.* ii (2), 672; *Morris's Dir. Ches.* (1874), 394.

¹⁹ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 738-9; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/122.

²⁰ Ches. R.O., EDP 164/9; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 183; H. Green, *Knutsford, its Traditions and History*, 110-11.

²¹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/122.

²² 31st Rep. Com. Char. 739.

²³ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/3/278.

²⁴ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 739.

²⁵ Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 111.

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ationers nominated by the owner of Norbury Booths. If the endowment was sufficient a further three free pupils were to be nominated by the vicar of Knutsford. The curriculum was to include Greek and Latin grammar and classics, English grammar, literature, and composition, history, geography, writing, arithmetic, accounts, mathematics, and algebra. French, German, drawing, and design were to be taught when the school's resources allowed the employment of an additional teacher.²⁶

The Taunton Commission reported in 1867 that the school was 'languishing'. The 25 pupils were all from the middle classes, except for 7 free foundationers, and there were only 2 boarders. Only the rudiments of the subjects prescribed in the 1856 Scheme were taught, since the boys were too few and left at too early an age to attain a high standard, and no boy had gone to university in the last five years. The school was severely hindered by the condition and situation of the school-house, 'a mean and inconvenient building', in a poor quarter of the town. Its yearly income from its endowments of £30 was less than one-third of what it might have been under better management.²⁷

From 1879 to 1880 the endowment was reorganized and the school, which was without a master, was temporarily closed.²⁸ In 1885 a new Scheme was devised. Eight governors were to be appointed, the nominators to include the owner of Norbury Booths and the vicar and churchwardens, vestry, and freeholders of Nether Knutsford. Greek was to be replaced by natural science and a modern language. There were to be at least five foundation scholarships which were to be awarded for preference to boys who were or had been pupils at a public elementary school in Knutsford.²⁹

In 1887 new school buildings, replacing those criticized by the Taunton Commissioners, were opened. The school, however, soon encountered financial difficulties and the governors sought help from the county council, Board of Education, and urban district council.³⁰ In 1904 they circularized various schools in the neighbourhood to discover their views about being taken over by the county.³¹ Finally in 1910 the governors resolved to close the school, in the absence of adequate grants from the county or the Board. A new Scheme was drawn up in 1911 under which the charity and its endowments were administered as the Nether Knutsford Exhibition Foundation, which awarded grants to enable local children to attend near-by grammar schools at Northwich and Altrincham.³² In 1957 the Scheme was amended and the charity became the Nether Knutsford Educational Foundation. Its income was henceforth devoted to grants to former pupils or residents of Nether Knutsford, to enable them to attend schools or other approved places of

learning or to assist their education in other ways.³³

The building completed in 1887 was pulled down in 1969.³⁴

LYMM GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE first reference to a school at Lymm³⁵ occurs in 1592, when the master was charged with performing an irregular marriage.³⁶ Thereafter no masters are known until the 1650s, after which a fairly regular succession may be traced.³⁷ The school, however, received no endowment until, under John Leigh of Oughtrington's will proved in 1696, £5 a year was devised to Lymm Grammar School, on condition that the master was thereafter to be appointed by or with the consent of George Leigh and his heirs.³⁸ In 1698, after the matter had been considered by a parish meeting, 16 acres of Lymm commons were inclosed to maintain a schoolmaster and usher, bound to teach the classics to the children of Lymm and of the households of Arley and Park Halls. The master was to be a graduate or undergraduate, of attested proficiency in Latin and Greek, and the usher qualified for admission to the universities. They were to be appointed by the lords of the manor, Sir George Warburton and William Domville, or their heirs, and the majority of the trustees, after examination by the bishop of Chester or the rectors of Lymm, and they were respectively to receive two-thirds and one-third of the school's income. School was to open with prayers and a reading from the Bible, and to close with a psalm. The masters were to ensure that their pupils went to church every Sunday and red-letter day, and to examine them every Monday on what they had learned. An hour every Saturday morning was to be devoted to the catechism. The founders also expected proficiency in the classics; all scholars able to speak Latin were to use only that language in the school.³⁹

In 1697 William Domville left £200 in trust to the churchwardens after his wife's death, for the benefit of the schoolmaster, who was to buy books and teach reading to ten poor children, resident in Lymm and nominated by Domville's heirs.⁴⁰ The will was disputed; the feoffees eventually obtained only half the bequest, in 1755.⁴¹

In the early 18th century the school was free to the whole parish. There were two departments. The master sent several pupils to the universities.⁴² The usher taught the poor boys writing and arithmetic and supplied them with books. In 1719 he was warned that they were to give no offence to the master and to behave like the other pupils.⁴³ English classes were also taken by one of the senior pupils.⁴⁴ There were then only two boarders and the school evidently enjoyed a

²⁶ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 46–7; newscutting from *Knutsford Guardian*, 29 Aug. 1968, kindly supplied by Mr. E. Morley, clerk of Knutsford parish council.

²⁷ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 46.

²⁸ *Knutsford Guardian*, 29 Aug. 1968.

²⁹ *Ches. R.O.*, P 7/14/4.

³⁰ *Knutsford Guardian*, 29 Aug. 1968; *Ches. R.O.*, SL 300/13/13.

³¹ D. M. Kay, *Lymm Grammar Sch.* 126.

³² *Knutsford Guardian*, 29 Aug. 1968.

³³ *Char. Com.* file, no. 525964.

³⁴ Inf. supplied by Mr. Morley.

³⁵ Thanks are due to the headmaster, Mr. G. W. Crowther, for his help in the preparation of this acct.

³⁶ D. M. Kay, *Lymm Grammar Sch.* 17–18; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 268.

³⁷ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 268–9; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 20–1.

³⁸ *Ches. R.O.*, SL 259/81/1; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 27–9.

³⁹ *Ches. R.O.*, P 119/6/1, f. 32; SL 259/81/10; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 39–44.

⁴⁰ *Ches. R.O.*, SL 259/81/9; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 33–8.

⁴¹ *Ches. R.O.*, SL 259/81/14; SL 259/89; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 59–63.

⁴² Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 336–7; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 116.

⁴³ *Ches. R.O.*, P 119/6/1, f. 48.

⁴⁴ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 337; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 58.

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very modest reputation.⁴⁵ By the end of the century it had declined in status; the masters were no longer graduates and none of their pupils are known to have entered the universities.⁴⁶ In 1767 the two rectors of Lymm, who disapproved of the conduct of the school, failed to take their customary place as trustees;⁴⁷ when the breach was healed in the 1790s the school was merely an elementary parish institution. In 1813 the rectors revised the statutes. Though the term 'grammar school' remained in use, the master was no longer required to be skilled in the 'original languages', and the usher no longer had to be learned enough to enter university. Local children were to be taught reading free but to pay for writing and accounts. Fees for strangers' children were left to the master's discretion.⁴⁸ In 1818 there were about 100 children, both boys and girls, at the school, learning only reading, writing, and accounts.⁴⁹ At that time the school's income was rising steadily.⁵⁰

In 1862, after the school's standards had declined further, the Charity Commission drew up a new Scheme. The endowed school, the girls' National school, and the Jackson bequest of 1854 were consolidated into a single organization, the Lymm Educational Charities, under a governing body of nine including the two rectors and the proprietor of Arley Hall. The endowed school was moved into the girls' National school building and its existing schoolhouse was sold. It was to be open to all boys over 7 years of age resident in Lymm. The curriculum was to include Latin, Greek, English grammar, reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, history, geography, book-keeping, land surveying, drawing, French, and German.⁵¹ By 1864 a new master, a Durham graduate, was appointed, and in 1866 the school was described as 'semi-classical'. There were then 11 day pupils and 3 boarders.⁵²

The new school buildings soon proved very unsatisfactory, and in 1866 the trustees applied to the Charity Commission for permission to sell all the trust properties and to erect a new school from the proceeds. The application was unsuccessful.⁵³ Financial difficulties, divisions within the governing body, and deteriorating relations between the governors and the master led to the latter's resignation and the closure of the school in 1877.⁵⁴ A year later, after an inquiry by the Charity Commissioners, a new Scheme was drawn up, by which the local J.P.s and Lymm local board were represented on the governing body. Pupils were to be aged between 7 and 18 and to pay fees, though provision was also made for foundation scholarships. The curriculum was to include religious instruction, the elements, geography, history, English grammar,

composition, and literature, mathematics, Latin, French, and natural science. Greek and German were to be extras.⁵⁵ In 1882 one of the governors, George Dewhurst, offered land for a new school building and contributed about one-seventh of the cost of its erection.⁵⁶ The school reopened under a new master in 1885.⁵⁷

Until the 1890s the school made little progress. The new master was forced to retire because of ill-health in 1889; by then there were only 20 pupils, and the failure of the governors to provide scholarships and exhibitions aroused local hostility.⁵⁸ Towards the end of the 19th century, however, numbers rose under a new master and scholarships were introduced. Science and technical subjects were emphasized at the expense of the classics; in 1893 only one pupil was learning Greek.⁵⁹ From 1891 the school received a regular grant from the Department of Science and Art;⁶⁰ in 1894 the county council granted £50 in return for the right to receive a copy of the school's accounts each year, and in 1896 after the school had raised £90 by private subscription towards the cost of a chemistry laboratory the county council granted £450.⁶¹

In 1901 a new Scheme provided for the admission of girls both as day pupils and as boarders.⁶² Numbers rose to 77, including 3 girl boarders, in 1904, and by 1907 almost all the ablest pupils were girls.⁶³ The change made the school buildings inadequate, and between 1904 and 1907 the Board of Education's inspectors stressed the resultant difficulties. Despite an annual grant from the Board, the governors, who since 1901 had included nominees of the county and urban district councils, were forced once more to turn to the local authority for aid.⁶⁴ A new Scheme of 1909 established a governing body dominated by the county council and Lymm urban district council.⁶⁵ The county council, which provided £3,500 for improvements to the school buildings, played an increasing part in administration; in 1919 it required the governors to raise staff salaries to accord with county scales; two years later age limits were modified in accordance with the county requirement that pupils be kept at the school until the age of sixteen. By 1927, when the county began to pay the grant formerly provided by the Board of Education, 40 per cent of the places were free.⁶⁶ The number of pupils rose from 96 in 1909 to c. 240 in 1933 and c. 325 in 1939.⁶⁷ Under the 1944 Education Act Lymm became a voluntary controlled school;⁶⁸ the preparatory department was closed, fees were abolished, and a new governing body of 18 included 9 nominees of the county council and 3 of Lymm U.D.C.⁶⁹ In 1945 Oughtrington Hall was bought to provide extra accommodation, since the

⁴⁵ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 101.

⁴⁶ Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 73; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/120; EDV 7/2/83.

⁴⁸ Ches. R.O., SL 259/40/1; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 79–80.

⁴⁹ Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 112.

⁵⁰ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/4/145; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 742.

⁵¹ Ches. R.O., SL 259/3/1–2.

⁵² *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 50; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 78, 86–7.

⁵³ P.R.O., ED 27/256.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 49; Ches. R.O., SL 259/45/1–2; SL 259/85/1–34; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 92–8.

⁵⁵ P.R.O., ED 27/256; Ches. R.O., SL 259/3/4.

⁵⁶ Lymm Grammar Sch., governors' minute bk.; P.R.O., ED 27/256.

⁵⁷ Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 105.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 107–10; P.R.O., ED 27/256.

⁵⁹ Sch. governors' minute bk.; Ches. R.O., SL 300/13/11; P.R.O., ED 27/256.

⁶⁰ Sch. governors' minute bk.

⁶¹ Ches. R.O., SL 259/11/2; SL 259/14; sch. governors' minute bk.; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 112–13, 115–16.

⁶² Sch. governors' minute bk.; Ches. R.O., SL 259/3/10.

⁶³ Ches. R.O., SL 259/17/5, 7; SL 259/56/2; SL 259/60/10–11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* SL 259/23/1, 3; SL 259/60/10–11, 13; sch. governors' minute bk.

⁶⁵ Ches. R.O., SL 259/3/12; SL 259/73/8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* SL 259/3/12; Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 145–53.

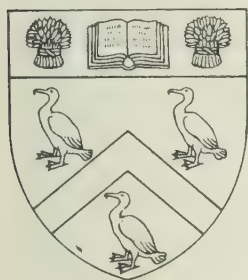
⁶⁷ Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 147; sch. governors' minute bk.; Kelly's *Dir. Ches.* (1934), 238.

⁶⁸ Sch. governors' minute bk.

⁶⁹ Char. Com. files.

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school buildings were inadequate for the 400 pupils then attending; twelve years later numbers had doubled, and the entire school moved to Oughtrington.⁷⁰



LYMM GRAMMAR SCHOOL.
Argent, a chevron between three cormorants sable; on a chief azure a book open proper, edged and bound, between two garbs or. [Granted 1960]

In 1978 it became a comprehensive school, known as Lymm Oughtrington High School, for pupils aged between 11 and 18; it retained its voluntary controlled status.⁷¹

The school has occupied four sites. The original building, which abutted on to the churchyard and dated from the 17th century, was demolished in 1896.⁷² Its successor, the unsatisfactory building purchased in 1862, was replaced by a cinema.⁷³ The brick buildings erected between 1882 and 1885 and extended in 1898 and at various later dates accommodated a secondary school in 1978.⁷⁴ The school at Oughtrington consists of the hall dating from the early 19th century with numerous additions made after 1945.⁷⁵

MACCLESFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

MACCLESFIELD Grammar School⁷⁶ was founded in 1502 by Sir John Percival, a member of the London Merchant Taylors' Company and lord mayor of London 1498–9,⁷⁷ with the advice and encouragement of Thomas Savage, archbishop of York. Percival provided for a priest at Macclesfield to pray for himself and his friends and to keep a free grammar school for children; for maintaining the priest he granted lands, rents, and hereditaments worth £10 a year to a self-perpetuating trust composed of 17 local gentlemen. An overseer of the lands was to be appointed at a salary of 6s. 8d.; the rest of the £10, after deduction of necessary expenses, was to be paid to the schoolmaster, who was to teach 'gentlemen's sons and other good men's children of the town and country thereabouts'. He and his pupils were to assemble every evening in Macclesfield church to remember the souls of Percival, his family, and his friend Richard Sutton; they were also to observe Percival's obit. As first

master Percival named his kinsman William Bridges.⁷⁸ Sir Richard Sutton, founder of Brasenose College, Oxford, remembered the school in his own will, dated 1524; thus from its foundation the school enjoyed a special link with the college which continued until 1855.⁷⁹

William Bridges, the first master, died in 1538, and the name of no successor is known until 1550s.⁸⁰ The school was affected by the Chantries Act, 1547; it was reported still to exist in 1548 but was probably closed between 1549 and 1552. It was saved by the intervention of Edmund Sutton, probably Sir Richard's nephew, who appealed to his master, the duke of Northumberland.⁸¹ In 1552 a continuance warrant was drawn up, assessing the school's net income from its original lands at nearly £11 and its income from new lands, formerly belonging to the dissolved college of St. John the Baptist, Chester, at a further £10.⁸² Shortly afterwards a royal charter confirmed the new arrangements and established a corporate body of governors. Under its dispositions 25s. was to be paid yearly to the Crown from the augmented revenues, leaving the school with an annual income of about £20. The governors were empowered to nominate a master and an usher, to determine their salaries, and to make written regulations for the school, on the advice of the bishop of Chester.⁸³ As before, they continued to be drawn from the chief families of the area, such as Leghs of Lyme and Adlington, the Downes of Shrigley, and the Davenport.⁸⁴

The first master of the refounded school was John Bold, 'a discreet man, skilled in grammar' and probably an Oxford graduate. Engaged at a salary of £13 6s. 8d., he remained at the school until 1561,⁸⁵ when he was succeeded by John Brownsword, an excellent classical scholar whose Latin verses were posthumously published by a pupil in 1589.⁸⁶ Under such masters the school flourished and sent numerous pupils to the universities, including in the 1550s the physician and poet Thomas Newton, himself briefly also a master there during Brownsword's absence in Stratford (Warws.), 1565–7.⁸⁷

By the early 17th century the school had expanded, and in the 1630s the first usher was appointed. Pupils continued to be sent to the universities,⁸⁸ including Sir Thomas Aston, later the royalist commander in Cheshire, who went to Oxford in 1617.⁸⁹ The governors, however, were mainly parliamentary and puritan in sympathy throughout the Civil War, and their views were reflected in their choice of master; in 1645 they appointed the nonconformist Henry Crosdale, then schoolmaster of Knutsford, who so gained their confidence as to be given grants totalling £30 to assist him

⁷⁰ Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 159, 163–4.

⁷¹ Inf. supplied by the headmaster.

⁷² Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 114; P.R.O., ED 27/256.

⁷³ Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 90–1.

⁷⁴ P.R.O., ED 27/258; Ches. R.O., SL 259/12/1–5; SL 259/14/1–19; SL 259/33.

⁷⁵ Kay, *Lymm Sch.* 159–64; Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 297–8.

⁷⁶ This account depends heavily upon G. E. Wilson, 'Hist. of Macclesfield Grammar Sch.' (Leeds Univ. M. Ed. thesis, 1952). Mr. Wilson's work draws extensively upon the sch. rec. which were not available for consultation when this account was being written, but were to be deposited in Ches. R.O. in 1980.

⁷⁷ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 2–3.

⁷⁸ Foundation chart., printed by order of the governors in

1877, from the original in the sch.'s possession.

⁷⁹ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 281.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 22; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 269.

⁸¹ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 34.

⁸² Ibid. 32–3, 35–6.

⁸³ Chart., 1552, printed in D. Wilmot, *A Short Hist. of the Grammar Sch., Macclesfield*, lii–lii.

⁸⁴ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 517.

⁸⁵ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 295–6; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 269.

⁸⁶ D.N.B.; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 19.

⁸⁷ D.N.B.; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 369; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 49–52.

⁸⁸ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 369.

⁸⁹ D.N.B.; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 37; *Alum. Oxon.* 1500–1714.

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in keeping his son at Cambridge in the 1650s. Crosdale was ejected in 1662 for refusing to conform to the Act of Uniformity, and at his departure the governors again showed their appreciation by giving him £100 as compensation.⁹⁰

Crosdale left a flourishing school and his successor found it necessary to appoint a second assistant.⁹¹ The governors demanded in 1667 that every usher have at least a bachelor's degree and every headmaster a master's,⁹² and in 1675 they secured the appointment of the mathematician Thomas Brancker, a puritan patronized by William, Lord Brereton. Brancker had been deprived of his fellowship at Exeter College, Oxford, for not conforming, but had subsequently recanted and received the benefice of Tilston.⁹³ He died after only one year, and was succeeded by a Cambridge graduate whose interest in learning is indicated

trated. There had been a dispute with certain Cheshire tenants over the title of lands in the original endowment. Nevertheless by 1662 the school had re-established its position.⁹⁷ In 1675 its income was about £140 a year, and by the 1690s the headmaster and usher received salaries of £60 and £30 respectively.⁹⁸

The dispute of the 1690s damaged the school. Numbers were so reduced that the 'petty school' was closed and the assistant usher dismissed.⁹⁹ In 1716 the headmaster Edward Denham (d. 1717), who was said to be 'scarce ever sober', was first admonished by Bishop Gastrell and subsequently arrested on a murder charge.¹ In the 1720s the then headmaster, the Revd. Joseph Allen, was accused by a local minister of Jacobitism and unseemly behaviour.² Under Allen the number of pupils sent to the universities seems to have diminished, and indeed in the 1750s an unsuccessful



MACCLESFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL c. 1775

by his establishing a library of some 150 volumes at the school.⁹⁴ Throughout the period the masters maintained their contacts with the universities and continued to send pupils to both Oxford and Cambridge.⁹⁵

In 1689, however, the smooth running of the school was disturbed by a dispute over the succession to the vacant mastership, originating in personal and political differences among the governors. The master, who was accused of disloyalty to William and Mary, was eventually confirmed in his post. Bishop Stratford of Chester was drawn into the quarrel, which was only resolved in 1701 after expensive litigation.⁹⁶ One cause of the bitterness was the high value of the mastership; the headmaster acted as rent-gatherer and overseer of resources which had expanded considerably since the beginning of the century. The school had experienced difficulties during the Interregnum, when its lands, which had been leased to a delinquent, were seques-

trated. There had been a dispute with certain Cheshire tenants over the title of lands in the original endowment. Nevertheless by 1662 the school had re-established its position.⁹⁷ In 1675 its income was about £140 a year, and by the 1690s the headmaster and usher received salaries of £60 and £30 respectively.⁹⁸

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⁹⁰ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 86; *Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews, 148; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 519; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 59–62.

⁹¹ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 59–62; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 270.

⁹² Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 519.

⁹³ *D.N.B.*; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 189.

⁹⁴ A contemporary list is preserved in the sch. rec.: Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 66, 313–18.

⁹⁵ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 369; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 35–6; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 179.

⁹⁶ *Ches. R.O.*, EDP 181/11; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.'

92–4; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 521.

⁹⁷ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 81; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 99; 3 *Sheaf*, ix, p. 94.

⁹⁸ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 101–6; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 521–2.

⁹⁹ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 66–8, 74.

¹ York, Borthwick Institute, Prescott's diary (26 June 1716); Birkenhead Public Libr., MA/S/1/2.

² Birkenhead Public Libr., MA/S/1/4–5.

³ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 282–3; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 34.

⁴ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 106–7.

⁵ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 522.

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mathematics, and French.⁶ Such actions were outside the provisions of the re-foundation deed of 1552 and the governors' anxiety about their legal position prompted them to obtain a private Act of Parliament in 1774 to amend its provisions.⁷ The results were gratifying. Under the Revd. Henry Ingles and the Revd. David Davies (headmasters 1774–90 and 1790–1828)⁸ the school gained a high reputation. For the first time the gentry families of Cheshire and neighbouring counties sent their sons to board there. Numbers rose: by 1802 there were 72 boarders and 19 day boys, and by 1807 the teaching staff included, in addition to the headmaster and usher, two assistant masters, a French master, and a writing and mathematics master.⁹ Although there were no university exhibitions, connexions with Brasenose College were by then stronger, and Davies usually sent pupils there.¹⁰ Several pupils achieved distinction, including in the 1780s and 1790s Sir James Parkes, 1st Baron Wensleydale, a successful judge, and the brothers John and James Abercromby, the former a general, the latter Judge-Advocate-General. In the early 19th century George Long, later professor of Greek in the new university of London, and Sir Travers Twiss, later professor of civil law at Oxford, also attended the school.¹¹ The curriculum included the classics, algebra, and Euclid, and, for the lower forms, writing, arithmetic, the use of globes, and modern and ancient geography. French was introduced throughout the school, and was taught in place of Greek to those pupils not intended for college or the professions. Most of the pupils paid fees; although the school was free to Prestbury parish boys, except for French, writing, and accounts, in practice the emphasis on the classics deterred poor children.¹²

In the early 19th century the school incurred local criticism on the ground that the founder's intentions were being disregarded through the charging of fees, the inordinate growth of boarders, and the adoption of an unsuitable curriculum. From 1820 the school's reputation declined, though fees remained high. The Charity Commissioners criticized the curriculum for including only one modern language and virtually no modern science, and the commercial education provided was felt to be inadequate for the needs of a town such as Macclesfield. By then there were only 11 boarders, 19 day pupils, and a staff of three.¹³ Nevertheless the financial position of the foundation continued to improve, and the staff enjoyed high salaries; in 1824 the governors obtained another private Act to enable them to grant longer building leases.¹⁴ In 1837 the governors decided to establish a separate modern school, under the control of the grammar school headmaster and governors but with its own headmaster, to offer instruction in writing, arithmetic, mathematics, modern languages, and other useful subjects, but to be prohibited from teaching the

classics and from taking boarders. Four university exhibitions were also introduced. After a further private Act had been obtained, the school opened in 1844.¹⁵ The curriculum at the grammar school thereafter became more severely classical; attempts to introduce German failed.¹⁶ In 1854, however, a new Scheme extended its curriculum to 'all the usual modern subjects' including chemistry and physical science. Two years later the grammar school moved to a new site in Cumberland Street, and by 1864 it contained 66 boys, including 13 boarders, as compared with 112 day pupils at the modern school.¹⁷

The Taunton Commissioners criticized the dual foundation as wasteful of manpower and excessively rigid in the segregation of pupils and subjects. Despite an exceptionally large income neither school was felt to provide 'an advanced and thorough preparation for professional pursuits'. Most pupils left without proceeding to higher education. The commissioners also noted a failure to provide for those poor boys for whom the foundation had been intended, and felt that both schools were too small.¹⁸ In 1875, after the grammar school had suffered from the death of one headmaster after only a year in office and the dismissal of another after allegations of professional misconduct,¹⁹ the Charity Commissioners reported unfavourably on its organization and recommended the reform of the governing body and the eventual amalgamation of the two schools.²⁰ A new Scheme drawn up by the Charity Commissioners in 1879 altered the governing body to include the mayor of Macclesfield and representatives of the bishop of Chester, the lord lieutenant of Cheshire, local magistrates, Macclesfield town council and school board. The curriculum was to include Anglican religious instruction, geography, history, English grammar, composition, and literature, mathematics, Latin, Greek, at least one foreign European language, and natural science. The modern school was to include Latin in its curriculum and its headmaster allowed to take boarders. Provision was made for it to be removed to a site beside the grammar school, and for the joint teaching of subjects which appeared in the curricula of both. Pupils' age limits were set at 9–19 for the grammar school and 7–16 for the modern, and in both up to 10 per cent were to receive total or partial exemption from fees and further annual awards for books. Both schools were to offer exhibitions tenable at universities or other places of higher education, but the grammar school was to have first claim on income from the endowment.²¹

Under Darwin Wilmot, headmaster 1876–1910, the grammar school began to recover from its difficulties. Its pupils in the late 1870s included the palaeontologist A. S. Woodward, later keeper of the natural history department at the British Museum.²² Numbers rose from 30 in 1876 to nearly 50 in 1879, and new

⁶ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 79, 110–12, 171.

⁷ Ches. R.O., EDP 181/11.

⁸ Ibid.; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 523–4.

⁹ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 115, 120–1; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 523.

¹⁰ Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 121.

¹¹ D.N.B.

¹² Birkenhead Public Libr., MA/S/1/7; Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 120–1.

¹³ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 153–6; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 43; J. Corry, *Hist. Macclesfield*, 138–44; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 525–7.

¹⁴ Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 120; Ches. R.O.,

EDV 7/3/308; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 516; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 148; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 522.

¹⁵ P.R.O., ED 27/261; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 197–8.

¹⁶ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 183, 187–8; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 68.

¹⁷ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 53–4; *Hist. Macclesfield*, ed. C. Stella Davies, 212.

¹⁸ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 53–63.

¹⁹ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 525; Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 82–4; P.R.O., ED 27/269, 271.

²⁰ P.R.O., ED 27/269.

²¹ Char. Com. files.

²² Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 88; D.N.B.

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buildings, including a chemistry laboratory, were erected in the 1880s. New foundation scholarships were established in 1880 and a girls' high school was opened in 1881. In 1892 the grammar school supported a headmaster and four graduate assistant masters, and the modern school a certificated head and three assistants; pupils numbered respectively more than 80 and 130. Movement between the two schools was more flexible. An inspection by the Charity Commissioners found that the modern school was not 'as good of its kind' as the grammar school.²³ Both schools were criticized in 1904 by the Board of Education inspectors as ill-equipped; the inspectors recommended amalgamation, more entrance scholarships, and more natural science.²⁴ In 1909 a new Scheme provided for the closure of the modern school within three years and the transfer of its pupils to the grammar school, which was henceforth to be known as the King's School, Macclesfield. Changes were also made to the governing body; the county council, which had been sending pupils to the school since 1900, and Manchester university acquired representation.²⁵

Local authority support brought rapid expansion, only temporarily retarded by the First World War. By the mid 1920s pupils numbered about 350, including an average annual entry of 25 scholarship boys supported by the county council. School buildings were extended and their facilities improved, and several university exhibitions were founded in memory of former pupils. Bequests in 1920 and 1930 enabled the governors to establish fifteen entrance scholarships, granting exemption from half the tuition fees, and a further two scholarships for pupils on advanced



THE KING'S SCHOOL, MACCLESFIELD. *Argent a lion rampant guardant holding between the forepaws a fleur-de-lys azure, banded or; on a chief gules three greyhounds' heads couped argent, collared or.*

[Granted 1968]

courses. New buildings added in the 1930s included a new science block, gymnasium, library, and cricket pavilion. In 1938 public school status was attained. Although the school was amongst those deprived of their grants by the Education Act, 1944, an agreement was made by which Cheshire county council continued to support boys there. By 1952 there were more than 700 pupils.²⁶ A new Scheme of 1958, amended in 1967 and 1974, increased local authority representation on the governing body and also raised the number of co-opted members.²⁷ In 1977 the school contained about 1,250 pupils, of whom about 150 in each year were supported by county scholarships.²⁸

The school has occupied three main sites. The original building, which stood to the south-east of the old church, remained in use until 1748; it was sold two years later. The house on the north side of Back Street, bought from Sir Peter Davenport, was found to be too small by the mid 19th century and new buildings were opened in Cumberland Street in 1856, erected to the designs of F. Bellhouse. In 1911 a neo-Georgian block to the east was added, and later buildings were erected to east and west; since 1940 expansion has taken place on the north side of Coare Street.²⁹

MALPAS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

MALPAS grammar school³⁰ was founded by Sir Randal Brereton, chamberlain of Chester,³¹ in 1528. The school was to be free to all comers, the only payments being 4d. a year for cock- and potation-pence. It was to offer instruction in classical grammar, based upon Robert Whittingham's *Grammar*, after a year of which the pupils were expected to speak only in Latin during lessons. The master, who was to be appointed by Brereton and his heirs male, or on their default by certain other specified persons, was always to be a graduate in holy orders, and was to be assisted by the older boys, who were to teach the infants their alphabet and primer. Brereton's foundation was also a chantry. School was to close each day with an antiphon or anthem to the Virgin and the psalm *De Profundis*, for the repose of the souls of Brereton and his family. The master was to act as chantry priest and to say mass daily in the Brereton chapel at Malpas church. He was also to arrange for the twice-yearly celebration of a solemn requiem mass for the founder and his wife, children, and ancestors, which he was expected to attend with his pupils.

For such duties the master was to receive £10 a year and an allowance to cover expenses arising from the chantry. Any surplus, together with any income during a vacancy, was to be kept in a strong box, the keys of which were held by the founder, the schoolmaster, and a chantry priest at Malpas church. Brereton had also built a school-house, and such monies were to contribute to its upkeep. If they proved inadequate, and the building fell into ruin, the master's salary for two years was to go towards its repair, and the master was to take 'such sums of money as he can agree with his . . . scholars', regardless of the statutes.

The foundation was to be administered by a self-perpetuating trust, but curiously there was no mention in the foundation deed of the trustees' names, or the lands they were to control. Others associated with Brereton in his benefaction were more explicit. A week after the foundation deed was drawn up, William Davidson, an alderman and merchant of Chester, settled two salt-houses and all their appurtenances in Iscoed (Flints.), with all his lands, rents, and services in Wigland, in trust for the school to support Brereton's foundation. At the same time Owen Brereton and

²³ P.R.O., ED 27/263, 271, 272.

²⁴ Wilmot, *Short Hist.* 118, 122-4.

²⁵ Char. Com. files.

²⁶ Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.' 256-9; *Hist. Macclesfield*, 215-16; P.R.O., ED 27/6906.

²⁷ Char. Com. files.

²⁸ Inf. supplied by the headmaster.

²⁹ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 517; Wilson, 'Macc. Gr. Sch.'

110, 185; *Ches. R.O.*, EDP 181/11; *Hist. Macclesfield*, 212; Pevsner and Hubbard, *Ches.* 269; inf. from the headmaster.

³⁰ The help of the Revd. T. M. Rylands in making available Malpas par. reg., kept at the church, is gratefully acknowledged.

³¹ E. W. Ives, 'Ct. and Co. Palatine in the Reign of Henry VIII', *T.H.S.L.C.* cxxiii. 4-5.

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David Dodd granted to the school the land on which Randal Brereton had constructed the new school building.³²

The school thus founded received John Lathom, an Oxford graduate, as its first master.³³ It did not, however, long endure in its original form. In 1546 it was reported that it had collapsed because Sir Roger Brereton had resumed the lands and tenements, worth £12 a year, which his father had assigned to the support of the schoolmaster.³⁴ Nevertheless, the school survived on William Davidson's endowment. In 1560 it was said to be supported by two salt-houses and other lands.³⁵ In 1563 John Maddock was teaching at Malpas, and other masters are named in 1571 and 1578.³⁶

Little is known of the school in the 17th century beyond the names of some of its masters,³⁷ who on occasion were also ministers of Malpas.³⁸ No Malpas pupils are known to have gone to university in that period, and by the end of the century the school had much declined, with the loss of its income from the salt-pits. In 1697 it was re-founded by Hugh, Viscount Cholmondeley (d. 1725), who gave £200 'to revive the school'. Assisted by £100 bequeathed earlier by the Revd. William Holland of Heaton, and by a further £220 contributed by several other local gentlemen, Lord Cholmondeley set aside an estate valued at £250, to provide the school with an annuity of £25.³⁹

New statutes were drawn up in 1697. The master was to be learned in Greek and Latin and a member of the Church of England. Free education was available only to the descendants of the school's benefactors, and the parish poor. All children were to pay a shilling on entrance, except the poor, who were to be admitted free. Any income during a vacancy was to be used to purchase school books. Lord Cholmondeley's right to appoint the master was confirmed; Richard Cholmondeley of Cholmondeley and his heirs male had been named by Brereton as responsible for appointing the schoolmaster at Malpas, in default of his own heirs male, and Lord Cholmondeley's ancestors had apparently exercised that right.⁴⁰

By the early 18th century the school had two houses, valued at £3 a year, besides the £25 annuity. The Cholmondeleys retained their right to nominate, although its use was sometimes controversial. In 1719, for example, there was a dispute over the mastership. The school trustees early in that year had appointed a master to replace Edward Brown, deeming Hugh, 1st earl of Cholmondeley, to have lost his right by failing to exercise it within six weeks of the occurrence of

the vacancy. The earl, however, soon afterwards appointed a candidate of his own. The situation was complicated by the fact that Brown had not then resigned, and only did so later in 1719. Thereupon the earl reappointed his nominee and asked the bishop for a licence. The dispute was finally resolved in 1720 when the trustees confirmed the earl's defective appointment.⁴¹

During the later 18th century Malpas continued to offer a classical education. Ralph Churton, later archdeacon of St. David's and a prolific writer on ecclesiastical subjects, was educated there in the 1760s and early 1770s, before going on to Oxford.⁴² From 1798, when John Vaughan was appointed master,⁴³ until about 1830 the pupils were entirely fee-paying. Freed from the encumbrance of foundationers Vaughan carried on a flourishing school. At his own expense and with the assistance of Lord Cholmondeley's agent who advanced him four years' salary, he erected a new building and converted the old school-room into a dining-room for boarders.⁴⁴ The school continued to be termed a grammar school and Latin was taught there.⁴⁵

About 1830 Lord Cholmondeley nominated seven boys to be taught free, including some who were descendants of the original subscribers.⁴⁶ The practice was continued throughout the century.⁴⁷ The Taunton Commissioners reported that the school had about 30 pupils, of whom 6 were free by nomination. For the rest fees were half a guinea a quarter and the cost of their own books. Fee-paying children were the sons of farmers or shopkeepers, never of labourers. The curriculum included mensuration, arithmetic, English history, elementary Latin grammar, writing, and reading. Few pupils remained after 13, and none had gone to university in recent years. The school was in fact a National school for farmers' sons.

The inspector was not hopeful about the school's future. He considered the premises to be too small and badly situated in the middle of the town. The annual income was only £25 and could not be increased.⁴⁸ The school nevertheless continued until 1909, and in 1892 it had about 50 pupils.⁴⁹ In 1909 the school buildings and site were sold and the endowment transformed into the Malpas exhibition fund, the income of which was applied to exhibitions awarded to children resident in Malpas who had attended public elementary school for at least two years.⁵⁰

The original school-house, built in 1528, was rebuilt in the late 18th century.⁵¹ It stood behind the marketplace at Malpas, but has disappeared.⁵²

³² Anon., 'Malpas Grammar Sch.', *ibid.* lxx. 194-207; Ches. R.O., DCH/C/446-8.

³³ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 270.

³⁴ Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 618.

³⁵ Ches. R.O., DCH/C/463.

³⁶ 4 *Sheaf*, iv. pp. 3-4, 6; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 270.

³⁷ Not all the masters listed by Rogers ('Teaching Profession', 270-1) at Malpas taught at the grammar sch.

³⁸ e.g. Thos. Bridge, Robert Thorlton: Malpas par. reg. s.d. 1624, 1654; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 271; Joan Beck, 'Educ. in Ches. in 17th Cent.' *J.C.A.S.* xlviii. 41. Rogers and Miss Beck render Thorlton as Thornton.

³⁹ Ches. R.O., EDP 186/10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* EDP 186/10.

⁴² *D.N.B.*; Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 123.

⁴³ Ches. R.O., EDP 186/10.

⁴⁴ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 577; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 618.

⁴⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/6/328; 7/7/354B.

⁴⁶ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 577.

⁴⁷ *White's Dir. Ches.* (1860), 183; *Kelly's Dir. Ches.* (1892), 345.

⁴⁸ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 64-5.

⁴⁹ *Kelly's Dir. Ches.* (1892), 345.

⁵⁰ Ches. R.O., DCH/1692/Schools/24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* DCH/C/447; Ormerod, *Hist. Ches.* ii. 618.

⁵² Inf. from the Revd. T. M. Rylands.

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MOTTRAM IN LONGDENDALE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THERE was a master at Mottram⁵³ as early as 1557. John Thornell taught there in 1563 and Reynold Bretland in 1597.⁵⁴ The school was, however, transformed in 1612 when Robert Garsett, a Norwich alderman, left £100 towards the maintenance of a free school at Mottram on condition that the lord of the manor or another gentleman did likewise. In consequence Richard Wilbraham, then lord of the manor, raised £100 through voluntary contributions, and in 1619 he and Garsett's son paid £100 apiece to the school's trustees, who in 1632 used the money to buy land in Haughton near Woodhey.⁵⁵ The school continued to receive benefactions throughout the 17th century. Nicholas Dearnley left £30 in 1677 and Robert Hyde £5 a year in 1684;⁵⁶ by the early 18th century the master had an annual salary of £16 10s., of which £14 came from land in Bunbury.⁵⁷ The school-house was also twice rebuilt at local expense. In 1623 William Hollingsworth left 13s. 4d. towards the cost of the new building erected in the 1620s,⁵⁸ a structure again renewed by the parishioners in 1670.⁵⁹

The school's benefactors required 'a religious, honest, and learned person' to teach the children of the parish reading, writing, and the Greek, Latin, and English languages. Garsett's son Robert was to have first nomination of the schoolmaster, in alternation with Wilbraham. If they or their descendants neglected their duty the right was to pass to the minister and churchwardens of Mottram and then to the bishop of Chester.⁶⁰ Garsett's nominee, John Etchells,⁶¹ the first master of the refounded school, was probably a Cambridge graduate, and at least one of his pupils, Richard Charlesworth, went up to Cambridge in 1645.⁶² Etchells was succeeded in 1670 by Henry Moreton, an Oxford graduate presented by Richard Wilbraham's grandson Thomas.⁶³ In 1717, however, the right of nomination was said to rest with the bishop, or the minister and churchwardens of Mottram.⁶⁴ That arrangement produced a dispute in the 1750s when the parishioners objected to the usher's demand for fees for teaching writing.⁶⁵ The surviving trustee defended Wardleworth, the usher, on the grounds that the latter's contract with the master specified that he be paid for teaching writing and that he had been ignorant of the founder's intentions. By 1765 the matter had been settled and the parishioners sought Wardleworth's promotion to the mastership. In 1766 the question of the right to nominate was also settled when R. Wilbraham renounced his family's claims and stated that as the

Garsett family was extinct, the right devolved upon the vicar and churchwardens of Mottram.⁶⁶ The latter, however, failed to appoint, and in 1766 the bishop nominated Wardleworth at the parishioners' request.⁶⁷

Wardleworth was not a successful master. In 1778 the school was said to contain only about 30 pupils, mostly the children of poor parents. The vicar reported that the parishioners were anxious for Wardleworth's removal.⁶⁸ In 1789 the school was described as woefully neglected and the subject of frequent complaints from the parishioners. Despite an endowment worth more than £50 a year, the pupils received little instruction.⁶⁹ Wardleworth's inadequacy eventually obliged the parishioners to build another school.⁷⁰

There was some improvement under Wardleworth's successor, James Turner, vicar of Mottram. In 1804 the school was described as well run⁷¹ and in 1811 it had about 130 pupils.⁷² In the 1830s, however, under William Johnson, Turner's successor as both vicar and master, the school had fewer than 20 pupils, none over 10 years old. It was run by an assistant paid 14s. a week, and Johnson, who received a salary of £65 a year, performed only nominal duties. The principal local inhabitants no longer sent their children to the school, which taught only the elements, and the school-house fell into disrepair. The parishioners were dissatisfied because the master apparently appropriated the difference between his and the usher's salaries and refused to maintain the building, allowing the income from the endowment to accumulate until it exceeded £100. The inspector concluded that it was 'a case requiring the intervention of a court of equity'.⁷³

Shortly after his report the school fell into abeyance, continuing thus for 20 years;⁷⁴ in 1850 the school-house was described as very dilapidated.⁷⁵ In 1858, however, George Woodhead restored the old building at a cost of £200, and as a result of his efforts the school reopened in 1860.⁷⁶ A new Scheme was drawn up, under which the school was open to boys aged from 6 to 18, day or boarding. Six trustees were appointed, including the vicar of Mottram *ex officio*. The master was required to be an Anglican and to teach religious knowledge, Latin, English literature and composition, the principles of natural philosophy, history, geography, arithmetic, book-keeping, surveying, drawing, reading, and writing.⁷⁷

The Taunton Commission's inspector reported in 1867 that the school had 39 pupils, of whom 2 were boarders. A single master taught the curriculum prescribed by the Scheme, showing particular competence in arithmetic and English history. There was then some debate about the school's future. Most of the trustees,

⁵³ Thanks are due to Canon Roach, vicar of Mottram, and to Mr. D. E. Handley, headmaster of Mottram Church of England primary school. Mr. Handley made available the school logbook, and Canon Roach supplied information about the school deeds, recorded at the vicarage in 1867 but subsequently destroyed.

⁵⁴ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 272.

⁵⁵ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 495-6; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 140.

⁵⁶ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 496.

⁵⁷ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 278-9.

⁵⁸ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 139.

⁵⁹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/3/355.

⁶⁰ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 495-6; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 140.

⁶¹ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 139-40.

⁶² Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 373.

⁶³ Ibid. 272; Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 140.

⁶⁴ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 278-9.

⁶⁵ It was enrolled in 1651, but the roll for that year is lost: 31st Rep. Com. Char. 495.

⁶⁶ Ches. R.O., EDP 198/12.

⁶⁷ Ibid. EDA 1/7, f. 70.

⁶⁸ Ibid. EDV 7/1/88.

⁶⁹ Ibid. EDV 7/2/96.

⁷⁰ Earwaker, *E. Ches.* ii. 141.

⁷¹ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/3/355.

⁷² Ibid. EDV 7/4/154.

⁷³ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 496-7.

⁷⁴ White's *Dir. Ches.* (1860), 674-5.

⁷⁵ Bagshaw's *Dir. Ches.* (1850), 177.

⁷⁶ White's *Dir. Ches.* (1860), 674; inscription on old sch.-house.

⁷⁷ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 69.

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but only a minority of the parents, wished to see fees reduced to a minimum, more poor boys admitted free, and a curriculum adapted to the needs of the lower classes. The inspector, however, was critical of the plan and thought that the reduction in the income from fees might endanger the school's existence.⁷⁸

The school continued to offer the curriculum outlined in the 1857 Scheme, including a limited amount of French and Latin. After 1896, instruction was also offered in magnetism, electricity, and chemistry. Of 47 pupils in 1899 32 studied those subjects.⁷⁹ In 1905 girls were admitted, and numbers rose to about 60.⁸⁰

The school's finances were reorganized under the 1857 Scheme. The new trustees found it charged with a debt of over £450, which they subsequently reduced to £330 and finally paid off by public appeal. By 1860 the school's endowments produced over £65 a year,⁸¹ and its income had risen to about £90 a year in 1867.⁸² Nevertheless at the end of the century the school was in financial difficulties. It was unable to support itself through its fees, and was obliged to apply for grants from the Department of Science, Art, and Education, and the county council.⁸³ In 1900 the school derived £133 from the endowment, £90 from the county council, and about £64 from the department.⁸⁴ Eventually in 1912 it passed fully under the control of the county, as a public elementary upper standards school. By a Scheme of 1913 the charity was provided with 8 representative governors, appointed by the vicar and churchwardens, the appropriate district and county councils, and the council of Manchester University. The foundation's income was to be applied to maintain Mottram elementary school's premises and to provide special facilities for its pupils and exhibitions for children who lived in Mottram parish or attended the local school for at least two years.⁸⁵

The school-house, erected on the south side of the churchyard in the 1620s and reconstructed in 1670 and 1858, was still standing in 1976, when it was used by the church as a parish room. A new school was built in 1896,⁸⁶ and was occupied in 1976 by the Mottram Church of England primary school.

NANTWICH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE school⁸⁷ was founded by John and Thomas Thrush, woolpackers of London,⁸⁸ between 1548, when it was recorded that Nantwich was in great need

of a grammar school, and 1572, when reference was made to a pupil at the school beside the church, the site occupied by the school until 1858.⁸⁹ One of the earliest masters was John Maddock, possibly a Cambridge graduate, who was teaching in Nantwich in 1563.⁹⁰ Under his successor, Randle Kent, a non-graduate, who taught at the school for fifty years until his death in 1623,⁹¹ the school, which was enlarged at Kent's own expense in 1611, appears to have prospered.⁹² In 1617 one of his pupils pronounced an oration before James I when he visited Nantwich.⁹³ Throughout the 17th century, under a succession of graduate masters such as William Shenton, Robert Simonds, John Dolman, and Thomas Chaloner, the school achieved a certain success in sending pupils to university.⁹⁴

By 1783 the curriculum resembled that of a charity school, and Thomas Adderley, a former Cambridge sizar, was engaged to teach grammar, writing, and arithmetic.⁹⁵ Whereas in the early 18th century the school had continued to employ graduates, after 1766 such masters were less common.⁹⁶ Few pupils of the school seem to have attended university in the 18th century, though a boy taught by John Kent went to Cambridge in 1785.⁹⁷ William Walford, a pupil at the school in the 1780s, later recalled that the standard of Latin was not high, and that very few boys learned Greek; the master had to teach a hundred pupils with the assistance of only one usher, and had difficulty in maintaining discipline.⁹⁸ In 1796 in addition to the classics the curriculum included English grammar and composition, geography, arithmetic, and merchant's accounts.⁹⁹

In the late 1830s the school, which had apparently closed temporarily in the previous decade, had little income and no school house.¹ It seems that the Thrushes had purchased the school building from Queen Elizabeth I, but had made no other benefaction: in the early 18th century the school was said to have no income except that derived from various later bequests which brought in only £6 a year.² The foundation had passed into the control of the Wilbrahams of Townshend House, who nominated the masters until the 19th century;³ Roger Wilbraham gave the school the interest on £50 in 1663,⁴ and thirty years later his namesake is recorded as making regular payments to various Nantwich schoolmasters.⁵ Nevertheless the school remained poor throughout the 18th century, and in 1778 it was reported that the endowments only earned £9 15s. a year compared with the local charity school's income of £18.⁶ The master was then teaching between six and eleven free

⁷⁸ Ibid. 68–9.

⁷⁹ Sch. logbk.

⁸⁰ Newscutting in sch. logbk.

⁸¹ *White's Dir. Ches.* (1860), 674.

⁸² *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 68.

⁸³ Sch. logbk.

⁸⁴ Ches. R.O., SL 300/13/13.

⁸⁵ Char. Com. files, no. 525805.

⁸⁶ Sch. logbk.

⁸⁷ Thanks are due to Mr. E. Lloyd of Nantwich and Acton Grammar School for helping to prepare this account. The minute and acct. bks. for 1860–1913 are kept at the school.

⁸⁸ D. King, *Vale Royal*, 71; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 644; Lysons, *Mag. Brit.* ii(2), 712; Hall, *Hist. Nantwich*, 373.

⁸⁹ 3 *Sheaf*, lv, pp. 96–7.

⁹⁰ 4 *Sheaf*, iv. p. 4.

⁹¹ Ibid.; King, *Vale Royal*, 71.

⁹² Ches. R.O., will of Randle Kent (1623); Hall, *Hist. Nantwich*, 314; J. Partridge, *Hist. Acct. of Town & Par. of*

Nantwich, 57.

⁹³ King, *Vale Royal*, 70; Partridge, *Hist. Acct. of Nantwich*, 57.

⁹⁴ Hall, *Hist. Nantwich*, 373–5; King, *Vale Royal*, 71; *Alum. Oxon. 1500–1714*, s.v. John Dolman, Wm. Shenton; *Alum. Cantab. to 1751*, s.v. Thos. Chaloner, Robert Symond; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 273, 373.

⁹⁵ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/27, f. 44v.

⁹⁶ Ches. R.O., EDV 2/14–16; 2/24; 2/37; 7/1364.

⁹⁷ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 202–13.

⁹⁸ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 11.

⁹⁹ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 56; *Chester Chron.* 2 Jan. 1796.

¹ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 644.

² Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 225.

³ Ibid.; Hall, *Hist. Nantwich*, 374; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 148–9; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 644.

⁴ Hall, *Hist. Nantwich*, 207.

⁵ Ibid. 375.

⁶ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/165.

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pupils.⁷ There was little improvement after 1831: an annual income of £10 12s. was used to support eight free boys, four of whom were appointed by George Wilbraham and the others by the churchwardens and a descendant of one of the founders. They were taught reading, writing, and accounts for 5s. a quarter, and classics if their parents should require it. The new master, a layman, could take as many boys on his own terms as he could get, and in 1837 he had 9 boarders and 50 day pupils.⁸

The school next to the churchyard closed in 1858 when the last master, Thomas Talbot Day, resigned.⁹ In 1860 the foundation was amalgamated with the Nantwich Blue Cap School, and a new schoolroom and house were built, at the expense of George Wilbraham, in Welsh Row.¹⁰ The income of the new foundation, which was £30 a year, included the interest from £500 given by George Wilbraham and £200 by Hungerford, Lord Crewe (d. 1893), at whose disposal there were six free places, which, however, were seldom taken up.¹¹ In 1867 when the Taunton Commissioners reported that the buildings were too small, there were only 26 day pupils and 2 boarders, and the master had no need of an assistant. The subjects taught included Latin, history, arithmetic, geography, English grammar, and composition, and the inspector reported that although reading, writing, and spelling were good, Latin, history and arithmetic were less so. No boy had gone to university in the preceding five years.¹² Some fifteen years later, under Jermyn Hirst, Latin was given considerable prominence, English, algebra, and Euclid were well taught, but history and geography were much neglected. The school then consisted of 32 boys of whom 4 were foundation scholars who were looked down on because they did not learn Latin.¹³

In 1885 the Nantwich and Acton schools were amalgamated, with Jermyn Hirst as headmaster. There were to be nine free places, and fees for other pupils were to be from £4 to £8 a year, with boarders paying between £35 and £40. Subjects to be taught included Latin, geography, English grammar and composition, mathematics, natural science, and a modern language. While Hirst remained headmaster, Greek was to be taught at an additional yearly fee of at least £3.¹⁴

In the 1890s the Nantwich and Acton Grammar School suffered a yearly deficit of £100, and was threatened by the building of a new school at Crewe.¹⁵ In 1901 when S. A. Moore became headmaster there were only 45 pupils, of whom 37 paid fees.¹⁶ Moore adapted the curriculum to local needs by giving it a 'rural tone', and numbers rapidly increased.¹⁷ His

successor, A. T. Powell, continued the policy and introduced nature study, general elementary science, botany, physics, chemistry, and training in rural life and industry.¹⁸ From Easter 1905 girls had been admitted, and an assistant master was appointed.¹⁹ In 1909 a preparatory form was opened for children from six to eight years old, at fees of £2 a term.²⁰

As the school expanded, it depended increasingly on public funds. In 1896 the Cheshire county council had contributed to the building of a science laboratory.²¹ In 1907, in return for providing further free places to children from Nantwich urban and rural districts, the school received extra grants.²² Four years later the governors sought to vest all school property in the county council, in return for a guarantee to retain the old name of the school and the foundation scholarships.²³ In 1913 it became a controlled school, the governors henceforth being appointed by the county council and including representatives of Nantwich urban and rural districts and of Manchester University.²⁴ There were then 144 pupils, of whom 40 received county and 8 foundation scholarships, and new buildings were begun to provide adequate accommodation.²⁵ After their completion in 1921 the school continued to expand. In 1938 there were 421 pupils, of whom 354 were in the senior school.²⁶ After the 1944 Education Act all places became free, and the foundation funds were devoted to university scholarships and maintenance grants.²⁷ The school became known as Nantwich and Acton County Grammar School. In 1948 the preparatory form was closed.²⁸ The school continued to increase in size, and by 1963 contained over 800 pupils.²⁹

In 1976 the school was housed principally in the neo-Georgian brick buildings of 1921, supplemented by later extensions, although a building of 1860 remained in use as a classroom. There were in 1976 over 1,100 pupils. After further extensions the school became the comprehensive Malbank School in 1977.³⁰

SIR JOHN DEANE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL, NORTHWICH

NORTHWICH, or, as it was originally known, Witton grammar school³¹ was founded in 1557 by John Deane, priest of St. Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield.³² He endowed it with land in Chester and elsewhere in Cheshire, and with a salhouse in Northwich. Deane appointed twelve trustees, including several of his own kin, who were to pay the schoolmaster's salary of £12 a year to the churchwardens of Northwich. If the annual

⁷ Ibid., EDV 7/1/65; 7/2/59; 7/3/358.

⁸ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 644-5.

⁹ Hall, *Hist. Nantwich*, 378.

¹⁰ Ibid. 382-3.

¹¹ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 73-5; acct. bk. of Nantwich Sch. 1860-1907.

¹² *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 73-5.

¹³ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 17; school magazine, 1933 (kept at the school).

¹⁴ Char. Com. files, no. 525965 (Scheme of 1885).

¹⁵ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 22-3; minute bk. of Nantwich & Acton. Sch. 1885-1913 (minute of 31 July 1901); *Nantwich Guardian*, 23 Dec. 1908.

¹⁶ Minute bk. 1885-1913 (minute of 25 Oct. 1901).

¹⁷ *Nantwich Guardian*, 23 Dec. 1908.

¹⁸ Ibid.; prospectus preserved at the sch.

¹⁹ Minute bk. 1885-1913 (minute of 16 Jan. 1905).

²⁰ Ibid. (minutes of 27 May and 12 July 1909).

²¹ Ibid. p. 37.

²² Ibid. (minute of 15 Oct. 1907).

²³ Ibid. (minute of 24 July 1911).

²⁴ Char. Com. files, no. 525965 (Scheme of 1913).

²⁵ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 24.

²⁶ Ibid. 25.

²⁷ Minute Bk. 1913-63; Ches. R.O., SL 254/1/3, p. 1508; SL 254/1/4 (1953), pp. 116-17.

²⁸ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 26.

²⁹ Inspector's rep., 1963 (preserved at the school).

³⁰ Lloyd, *Hist. Nantwich & Acton Grammar Sch.* 26.

³¹ This account depends heavily on Marjorie Cox and L. A. Hopkins, *Hist. of Sir John Deane's Grammar Sch., Northwich*. The sch. rec. were deposited at Ches. R.O., in 1976, together with other doc. discovered in 1968, and are classified under the general reference SL 300.

³² Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 9-26.

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revenue from the endowment rose above £12 the excess was to be used at the churchwardens' discretion to provide an usher. During Deane's lifetime the master was to be examined, nominated, and if necessary dismissed by Deane himself or his agents. After his death the duty was to devolve upon the bishop of Chester and the master of the King's School, Chester, who were closely to supervise the candidates chosen by the school feoffees.

The schoolmaster was to keep a free grammar school within Witton township. He was subject to elaborate statutes, influenced by those drawn up by Colet for St. Paul's, which decreed that he be a learned, sober, discreet, and unmarried Oxford or Cambridge graduate at least 30 years of age. His pupils, who were to be at least 6 years old, were subject only to an entrance fee of 4d. No other fees or residential qualifications were mentioned, Deane's only requirement being that his kinsfolk be freely taught. The boys were to learn 'good literature, both Latin and Greek', the recommended curriculum including the catechism, Henry VIII's accidence and grammar, Erasmus's *Institutum Christiani Homini*, *Copia*, and *Colloquia*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the works of Terence, Cicero, Horace, Sallust, and Virgil. Deane, who wished 'specially to increase knowledge and worship of God and our Lord Jesus Christ', insisted on worship three times a day in the school, at which there were to be prayers for the founder, his father and mother, and all Christian souls. Every Friday the seven penitential psalms and collects were to be said, and once a year on 7 August the dirge and commendations were to be said in the parish church.³³

Despite their detail Deane's arrangements over new feoffments, the appointment of masters, and the relations between the feoffees and the churchwardens were confused, and within four years of the school's foundation he had to clarify his intentions. Two bailiff feoffees were chosen to receive rents and account yearly to their colleagues and the churchwardens, and to be responsible with the latter for the repair of the buildings.³⁴

The first schoolmaster was John Bretchgirdle, curate of Witton and later vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon (Warws.), who probably taught at Witton before his appointment as master of Deane's new school. Portrayed in the Latin verse of his pupil John Brownswerd,³⁵ he emerges as a talented master, proficient in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin.³⁶ His immediate successors were all, as Deane demanded, Oxford or Cambridge graduates, though some were under 30.³⁷ The most distinguished was Thomas Farmer, master from 1586 to 1625, who gave such satisfaction to the feoffees that he received a bonus for many years and eventually had his salary increased. He died a man of substance, leaving goods valued at £354. His successor, Richard Pigott, was equally successful, narrowly missing appointment to Macclesfield in 1630 but proceeding to Shrewsbury in the 1640s.³⁸ Originally the master had no assistant, and from 1579 to 1601 ushers were

appointed only spasmodically, until established by Farmer as a permanent presence. From 1616 Farmer had two ushers, but after his death the number was again reduced to one. Such assistants did not have degrees, though they had generally matriculated at Oxford or Cambridge.³⁹

Under its early masters the school became notorious for its puritanism. In 1578 it was criticized for the failure of masters and parents to send their children for instruction in the catechism, and in the early 17th century Pigott was a notable puritan who became a member of a Shropshire classis after his removal to Shrewsbury. The school was then also a flourishing intellectual centre. By 1630 a library had been established, augmented in 1633 by a bequest of books worth £20 from a former pupil. Eleven Witton boys are known to have proceeded to Cambridge between 1557 and 1643, nine of whom were taught by Pigott.⁴⁰ They were from diverse social milieux, some being admitted as pensioners and others as sizars. The best known pupil of the period, however, was Sir John Berkenhead, son of an usher of the school, who entered Oxford in 1632 as a servitor and became a noted Royalist.⁴¹

Before the Civil War the school was administered by feoffees drawn from Deane's own kindred and other prominent neighbouring families, forming a tightly knit local circle.⁴² Its endowments, though not large, were sufficient, and its income improved from £21 10s. in 1578 to nearly £35 in 1621.⁴³ The school had by then accumulated considerable capital, and had received gifts and bequests from local inhabitants; in 1625 the schoolmaster, Thomas Farmer, left £50 to provide an exhibition to maintain a poor scholar at university.⁴⁴

Pigott's departure was followed by an unsettled period. There were several changes in the mastership, and none of those appointed between 1643 and 1656 is known to have been a graduate. Appointments included Randle Guest, a Presbyterian minister who possessed Greek texts. During the Civil Wars the school library was destroyed and one of its Chester properties, the Saracen's Head, was rendered virtually worthless; the school's income declined, and Parliament failed to respond to a petition of 1651 from the feoffees for financial assistance. Nevertheless in the 1650s three pupils were sent to Oxford and four to Cambridge.⁴⁵

Between the Restoration and the mid 18th century the school encountered many difficulties. Though the masters were usually graduates, many were young and few stayed longer than six years. From the 1640s to 1669 candidates were not examined by the bishop of Chester, and even after the duty was resumed the feoffees' Presbyterian sympathies revealed themselves in the appointment of Glasgow graduates in 1679 and 1693.⁴⁶ Between 1687 and 1702 no usher was appointed, though there were about 80 pupils by the latter date; academic standards fell and few boys proceeded to university.⁴⁷ New feoffees appointed in

³³ Ibid. 28–42, 292–302.

³⁴ Ibid. 303.

³⁵ D.N.B.

³⁶ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 45–50.

³⁷ Ibid. 50–1, 69–71.

³⁸ Ibid. 71–6; Ches. R.O., SL 300/4/1.

³⁹ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 66, 71–2, 77–9.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 68–9, 74–5, 85–6.

⁴¹ Ibid. 82–3; D.N.B.

⁴² Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 55–6.

⁴³ Ches. R.O., SL 300/4/1.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 56–64, 73.

⁴⁵ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 90–4, 97–8, 100–1; Ches. R.O., SL 300/2/42, SL 300/4/1; 4 *Sheaf*, iii, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 115–17, 120, 123, 125–6; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 286.

⁴⁷ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 111, 126–7; Ches. R.O., SL 300/4/2.

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1707 attempted to have ambiguities in the foundation statutes resolved by the bishop;⁴⁸ nevertheless a protracted and damaging lawsuit arose between the churchwardens of Witton and the headmaster and feoffees in 1719 over the disposal of income above £12 from the endowment. The master at that time was Thomas Finlow (d. 1720), a man of 'meagre qualifications'.⁴⁹ The lawsuit added to the school's financial problems, which had resulted from the destruction of the Saracen's Head and a decline in the income from the salthouse. In 1679 the master and usher had to agree to reductions in their salaries, and in 1710 subscriptions were solicited.⁵⁰

In 1748 the school, which had temporarily lapsed, reopened in new buildings, the cost of which had been met partly from subscriptions and partly from revenues from the endowment. The feoffees advertised for a graduate master, to be paid £50 a year and to keep an usher who was to be approved by the feoffees and to teach English for £10 a year.⁵¹ By 1778 the school had between 50 and 60 pupils and was divided into an English department teaching reading, writing, and accounts, and a classical department teaching Latin, Greek, and English literature, and occasionally sending a boy to university. Books included Xenophon, Horace, Virgil, Nepos, Milton, and Bishop Louth's English Grammar. The able and well-to-do, however, were not attracted to the school; the future engineer Eaton Hodgkinson was removed because of the master's severity, and even some of the feoffees sent their sons elsewhere.⁵² Financial difficulties and frequent changes in the mastership after 1812 accentuated the problems of the classical department. An attempt in 1816 to gain more pupils by offering instruction in Greek and Latin, according to the Eton grammars, free to all boys over six from the chapelry, was unsuccessful; in 1819 there were only seven boys in the department and when the master resigned in that year his post remained vacant until 1823.⁵³ Meanwhile the English department continued to attract between 30 and 50 pupils between 1786 and 1823, and after 1790 was in effect an independent school under the usher's control.⁵⁴ After a period of relative prosperity in the late 18th century the school's financial difficulties increased after 1800. Income from the estates fell sharply after the Napoleonic war, and crippling costs resulted from a protracted lawsuit in Chancery brought by the feoffees against Thomas Chantler, sole bailiff feoffee from 1797 to 1811.⁵⁵

Charles Hand, master from 1823 to 1853, tried to restore the status of the classical department at the expense of the English department. Initially successful, his efforts met with increasing local opposition, and in 1834 Hand instituted proceedings against the feoffees in Chancery after they had reopened the English department despite his opposition. By 1836 the school had closed; it only reopened in 1857, under a Scheme

drawn up by the Vice-Chancellor four years earlier. It was to be known as Witton Free School and to be administered by twelve trustees. It was to offer Anglican instruction; the master and usher were to be members of the Church of England, the former in holy orders. The master's salary was to be £120; if dismissed he was to have the right of appeal to the bishop of Chester. The curriculum was to include Latin, Greek, mathematics, sacred and general history, and 'other branches of a liberal education'. The usher was to teach English, writing, arithmetic, and the rudiments of the more advanced subjects, and a master was to be engaged to teach modern languages. Pupils were to be drawn from the whole chapelry and were to pay fees of 4 guineas a year, unless they came from Witton township, in which case they were to pay 2 guineas, no charge at all being made if they learned only Latin and Greek.⁵⁶ Ten years after the reopening the school was visited by the Taunton Commission's inspector, who found that the 45 pupils there were receiving instruction hardly better than that in the National schools. The buildings were inadequate, and the master, deprived of his proper salary by the diminished financial resources of the school, was said to be dissatisfied and hostile to the feoffees.⁵⁷

Meanwhile efforts were being made to remedy those shortcomings. Through the generosity of Richard Greenall, archdeacon of Chester (d. 1867) and his widow, and subscriptions raised in the parish, new buildings were opened in 1869, and by 1878 a playground and a headmaster's house had been added.⁵⁸ The resignation of Henry Linthwaite, master from 1857 to 1872, and the inspection of the school by the Endowed Schools Commission in 1873, resulted in a new Scheme of 1874 which made a decisive break with the original foundation. The new governing body of twelve included five representatives of the local boards of health. The bishop of Chester's jurisdiction was abolished, and the master, though he must still be an Anglican graduate, need no longer be in holy orders. The second master's position was safeguarded; he was to be dismissible only by the governors, and his stipend was to be at least £100. The school remained divided into senior and junior departments. Despite the headmaster's opposition Greek was dropped and natural science and political economy were substituted. Modern languages were to be an integral part of the curriculum. Age limits were set at 7 to 17 years, or 14 in the lower school. Residential qualifications were abolished. The governors were empowered to award foundation scholarships which would grant partial or total exemption from fees; they were to be competed for in the first instance by boys from the local elementary schools.⁵⁹

The new Scheme was initially successful; the number of pupils in the school rose from 55 in 1877 to 91 eight years later. The improvement, however, was

⁴⁸ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 137–43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 144–51; Ches. R.O., SL 300/3/1–2.

⁵⁰ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 108–12; Ches. R.O., SL 300/3/2, SL 300/4/2, SL 300/12/2.

⁵¹ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 156–61; Ches. R.O., EDP 305/11.

⁵² Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 166–9, 177–80; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/117; D.N.B.

⁵³ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 180–2; Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Sch.* i. 135–6.

⁵⁴ Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Sch.* i. 136; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 117; Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 183–8.

⁵⁵ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 166, 173–5; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/117, SL 300/1/1, SL 300/2/17, SL 300/3/3–13, SL 300/4/3, SL 300/4/6.

⁵⁶ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 191–5, 200–10; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 447–9; Ches. R.O., SL 300/1/1–2, SL 300/3/28, SL 300/3/38–9, SL 300/3/47–8, SL 300/3/52, SL 300/3/56.

⁵⁷ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 220; *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 104–7.

⁵⁸ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 222–3; Ches. R.O., SL 300/1/2.

⁵⁹ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 224–7; Ches. R.O., SL 300/2/38; P.R.O., ED 27/300.

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not maintained. The new buildings were criticized as inadequate by the Charity Commission in 1892 in spite of the addition of an upper storey in 1886. No laboratory was provided until 1898; meanwhile the school had to face competition from local technical schools. By 1897, when the upper and lower departments were amalgamated, the number of pupils had fallen to 38. The resulting loss of fees could ill be afforded in spite of the careful management by the governors of the endowment income which was reflected in its increase from nearly £500 in 1874 to £650 at the end of the century. Grants were obtained from Northwich local board (urban district council from 1895) between 1890 and 1898, from the department of science and art, and from Cheshire county council.⁶⁰

Inspection of the school by the Board of Education in 1904 was followed by its recognition and the receipt of grants. In 1907 a new Scheme for the school was produced. There were to be sixteen representative governors, nominated by the county and urban district councils and Manchester University. The school, which was to be known as Sir John Deane's School, Northwich, was to be co-educational and to absorb the Northwich Girls' High School which had been founded in 1890 and taken over by the county in 1904. Pupils were to be between 8 and 18 years old. Foundation scholarships were to be offered to pupils attending local elementary schools, and the governors could also provide maintenance allowances and leaving exhibitions. A new site and new buildings were given by Sir John Brunner and the school opened under the new Scheme in 1908.⁶¹ There were then 75 boys and 110 girls in attendance. Low fees and an increasing number of free places resulted in rapid growth, so that by the 1920s the school, with about 500 pupils, was the largest grammar school in Cheshire.⁶² Such growth overstretched the accommodation and staffing available. Fees had to be raised in the early 1930s to meet an overdraft of nearly £3,500, and in 1937 increased grants from the county council were obtained in return for greater supervision by the county of the governors' financial arrangements.⁶³

In 1947 the school became a voluntary controlled grammar school. Twelve representative governors were appointed by the local authority to work beside six foundation governors, and fees were abolished. No Scheme for the endowment was provided until 1967, when it was decided that up to half the endowment income was to be applied to special benefits for the school and the rest used to assist pupils or former pupils to further their education. By 1962 all girls had been removed from the school as a result of a decision by the county council in 1957 to build a new girls' school. With the introduction of comprehensive education into Cheshire it was resolved that the school

should become a co-educational sixth form college; the first pupils entered under the new scheme in 1978.⁶⁴

The first school building was erected in 1558 near Witton chapel. It had a slate roof and wattle and daub walls, and continued in use until c. 1744, when, having become 'quite ruinous and decayed', it was taken down. Beside it stood the 'master's chamber', a separate building with a thatched roof, which was replaced by a new two-storeyed house in the mid 17th century.⁶⁵ The second school building was erected in 1747 and stood very close to the east end of the chapel, on the south side facing the churchyard. It was demolished in 1869, having been sold to the parish.⁶⁶ Its successor was an undistinguished brick building which was itself sold, together with the master's house built in 1878, to the urban district council in 1911. The fourth school was built in 1907 and 1908 by the architects Powles and King, in a plain Tudor style, of red Ruabon brick dressed with Bath stone, on a six-acre site south of the town. A headmaster's house acquired at the same time was a 19th-century building not in the original gift. New extensions were added to the east side of the school in 1941.⁶⁷

SANDBACH SCHOOL

THE school⁶⁸ was mentioned in 1579 when Ottiwell Kinsey was named as master.⁶⁹ His next known successor was John Shawe (master 1606–16) who was also the curate and son of the local incumbent.⁷⁰ Thereafter, in the 17th century a discontinuous succession of masters is known, including at least two Oxford graduates, one of whom, Caleb Pott, subsequently became master of Macclesfield grammar school.⁷¹ Sandbach was then clearly a grammar school, and at least five of its pupils are known to have proceeded to university in the earlier 17th century.⁷²

The first recorded endowment was in 1677, when Sir John Crewe of Utkinton granted the school a yearly rent-charge of 17s. 4d. for the education of poor children in Sandbach. At about the same time Francis Welles built a school-house in which 20 poor boys of the parish were to be taught to read. Others of the local gentry contributed sums totalling over £250, including Welles's son Richard, who gave £100. It was agreed that Sir John Crewe and his heirs were to nominate two of the poor boys, Francis Welles four, the other donors a further seven, and the governors the rest. No trust, however, had been created, and by the early 18th century part of the original endowment had been lost. In 1718 a governing body of twelve was appointed, including the vicar of Sandbach *ex officio*, to elect the master and act as trustees of the estate. The surviving trustee also assigned Sir John Crewe's grant

⁶⁰ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 219–20, 227, 229–32, 237; Ches. R.O., SL 300/1/2, SL 300/2/39, SL 300/13/13; P.R.O., ED 27/303.

⁶¹ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 235–40; Ches. R.O., SL 300/2/43.

⁶² Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 240–4; Ches. R.O., SL 300/1/4, SL 300/12/51.

⁶³ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 250, 256–8; Ches. R.O., SL 300/2/46, SL 300/12/59.

⁶⁴ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 258–68; Ches. R.O., SL 300/1/4–5; info. from the sch.

⁶⁵ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 43, 64, 96, 306–8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 158–9; P.R.O., ED 27/300.

⁶⁷ Cox and Hopkins, *Hist.* 223, 228, 240–2, 258, 261, 265; P.R.O., ED 27/300.

⁶⁸ Thanks are due to the headmaster, Mr. J. H. Bowles, for help in making available the few rec. at the sch. W. H. Semper, *Hist. Sandbach Sch. 1677–1971* is especially useful for the 20th cent.

⁶⁹ 4 *Sheaf*, iv, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 62.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 278.

⁷² *Ibid.* 375.

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to the newly constituted body.⁷³ Soon afterwards the school received a further endowment from Charles Ward, who left £200 to maintain three boys to be known as Ward's scholars, and to prepare them for university. By will of 1717, executed in 1734, John Wheelock left a yearly sum of £6 to educate eight poor children of the parish in reading and writing. In 1731 the school's funds, together with those of the parish poor, were invested in land at Smallwood, about two-thirds of the rent from which went to the schoolmaster.⁷⁴

The school thus endowed was to teach both the elements and the classics, and the master was also allowed to teach Latin, Greek, and other subjects to private pupils. In the late 17th century at least two boys from the school went up to university, and although there is no record of Ward's scholars being appointed, at least eight natives of Sandbach entered Brasenose College, Oxford, in the 18th century.⁷⁵ In 1778 the master was held to be obliged to teach twenty boys reading, writing, and accounts and to prepare three others for university.⁷⁶ By the early 19th century, however, Sandbach was little more than a parish school with from 30 to 50 pupils.⁷⁷ In the 1830s the master taught reading and church catechism free and charged quarterly fees for writing and arithmetic; boys on the foundation were charged less. There were no Ward's scholars and the schoolroom was described as old and dilapidated; there was no school-house.⁷⁸

The school's income improved steadily in the 18th century and still further in the mid 19th when coal was found under its lands.⁷⁹ In 1837, however, the School lapsed, the trustees having decided to devote their funds to the replacement of the buildings. In 1848 a Scheme was drawn up under a private Act of Parliament to regulate the charity; the master's and usher's salaries were fixed, and a new schoolroom and master's house were to be built. The school was to be open to Sandbach children aged between 7 and 18, who were to pay fees. In 1853 the Charity Commissioners became official trustees of the school's lands.⁸⁰ The new buildings were erected in 1850 and in the following year a headmaster and two assistant masters were appointed.⁸¹ In 1855 the curriculum was expanded to include practical agriculture, chemistry, and land surveying, and a chemistry laboratory was built. Numbers rose rapidly and by 1857 there were about 60 boarders. Ten years later the Taunton Commission found 36 day pupils and 47 boarders. The curriculum then included divinity, classics, mathematics, history, French, German, music, natural science, surveying, and drawing, but Greek and Latin were not compulsory and only three-fifths of the school were taught them. Although few pupils remained beyond the age of 15 and many came late, a few boys had proceeded to

university in the previous five years. The inspector recommended that the unqualified second master should be compulsorily retired, extra staff employed, and salaries improved.⁸²

In the 1870s it proved hard to attract pupils; by 1880 there were only 42, including 11 boarders. An inquiry by the Charity Commissioners in 1884 revealed that few boys stayed beyond the age of 16; tuition fees were low but boarding fees were high, and as a result the day pupils were neglected by the masters to the great annoyance of the local inhabitants. Relations between the headmaster and the trustees of the Sandbach united charities were very poor.⁸³ A new Scheme drafted in 1887 provided for a governing body appointed by Manchester university, the Royal Agricultural Society, and local J.P.s and ratepayers. Pupils were to be aged between 8 and 17, and the curriculum was to include reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, English grammar, composition, and literature, mathematics, Latin, a modern foreign language, natural science, book-keeping, surveying, and drawing. Fees for tuition and boarding were fixed, and £150–200 a year was to be devoted to scholarships, two-thirds of which were to go to boys from local elementary schools; a further £120 was to be applied to leaving exhibitions.⁸⁴ The Scheme encountered much local opposition. In the event, the governors only awarded fifteen scholarships of £6 a year, tenable for two years,⁸⁵ and a Charity Commission inquiry in 1893 revealed bitter local resentment of the fact that all parents paid the same fees wherever they lived. An amending Scheme had to be dropped in 1895.⁸⁶

After the Education Act, 1902, the governors appealed to the Board of Education for recognition. An inspection by the Board in 1905 revealed that though the curriculum was satisfactory the buildings were inadequate and the headmaster's management of the finances was highly irregular.⁸⁷ A new Scheme of 1906 gave the county and district councils representation on the governing body, but after a further inspection in 1908 the school was again refused recognition.⁸⁸ Yet another new Scheme of 1911 reorganized the governing body.⁸⁹ Relations with the Board of Education, however, only improved after the death of the chairman of the governors, after a tenure of almost fifty years, in 1919.⁹⁰

In 1888 there were only six pupils at the school. Under G. H. Heslop, headmaster from 1888 to 1898, numbers rose to more than 100; after an initial fall under his successor S. W. Finn the school gradually recovered; new buildings were opened in 1911 and when Finn retired in 1926 there were 114 pupils, including 25 boarders.⁹¹ Finn's successor introduced a sixth form and the school expanded further, new

⁷³ The sch. deeds have long been lost. The indenture of 1718 was seen in the 1830s and 1880s: 31st Rep. Com. Char. 706–7; J. P. Earwaker, *Hist. Sandbach*, 77–8; Chester City R.O., CR 63/1/39.

⁷⁴ Earwaker, *Sandbach*, 78; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 707–9.

⁷⁵ Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 61.

⁷⁶ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/78.

⁷⁷ Ibid. EDV 7/4/212.

⁷⁸ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 708.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 707–8; Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/78, EDV 7/7/447; Earwaker, *Sandbach*, 79.

⁸⁰ Earwaker, *Sandbach*, 79; Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 10–12; 11 & 12 Vic. c.11(Priv. Act); *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 80, 82–3.

⁸¹ *Bagshaw's Dir. Ches.* (1850), 493; *White's Dir. Ches.* (1860), 532; S. W. Finn, *Hist. Sandbach Sch.*; Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 13.

⁸² *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 80–5.

⁸³ P.R.O., ED 27/306; Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 19–20.

⁸⁴ P.R.O., ED 27/306.

⁸⁵ Finn, *Sandbach Sch.*

⁸⁶ P.R.O., ED 27/312.

⁸⁷ Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 29.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 44–5.

⁸⁹ Char. Com. file no. 525923.

⁹⁰ Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 45, 49.

⁹¹ Ibid. 24, 28, 44, 50; Finn, *Sandbach Sch.*; sch. admission reg.

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buildings being opened and playing fields acquired. By 1933 there were over 200 pupils at the school, mostly day boys, and in 1937 the governors closed the boarding house, which by then had only 9 occupants.⁹²

In 1945 the governors decided to revert to full independence. Fees were raised, the boarding house was reopened, the preparatory section was reorganized, and classical studies were encouraged. In 1956, however, the governors' policy changed. They decided to discontinue the boarding school, and in 1957 they agreed to take 60 boys a year, paid for by the local authority, from south-east Cheshire, while retaining the school's independence and continuing to take fee-paying pupils. Between 1959 and 1976 the number of pupils rose from 300 to 940. In the latter year the governors made a new agreement with Cheshire county council to make 180 places available to pupils of mixed ability from the local area; the school, however, was to remain single-sex and independent.⁹³

condition that they pay £10 a year to a schoolmaster in his native parish.⁹⁶ The master, who was to be appointed by the company, was to teach grammar freely to the children of Stockport and its environs. He was to be in holy orders and to say mass and the offices in Stockport parish church for the benefit of the souls of Shaa and his parents. His pupils shared in his duties; every Wednesday and Friday they and the master were to come to the Shaa family grave in the church and there say the psalm *De Profundis*, 'with the versicles and collect thereunto accustomed after Salisbury use', and pray for the souls of the Shaa family and all the faithful departed.⁹⁷

The terms of Shaa's will were not executed immediately. The Goldsmiths only agreed to undertake their duties in 1491 in return for an additional grant of land worth £40.⁹⁸ Thomas Fereby was appointed trustee of the estate, and in his will of 1506 devised various properties to the company to ensure the fulfilment of



SANDBACH SCHOOL IN 1849

The buildings of 1849–50 were designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the late Gothic domestic style and built of red and black brick. They comprise headmaster's house, former boarding accommodation, and a large schoolroom. New buildings designed by A. Price were added in 1911, and further extensions made in 1931–2 and after 1956. In 1958 the former boarders' dining hall was converted into a chapel.⁹⁴

STOCKPORT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

STOCKPORT grammar school⁹⁵ was founded in 1488 by Sir Edmund Shaa, a Cheshire man who became a goldsmith and lord mayor of London. He left property worth £17 a year to the Goldsmiths' Company on

Shaa's wishes.⁹⁹ By 1496 the school was functioning under the mastership of John Randall.¹ Little is known of the early masters, but at least one was a graduate,² and another served as a priest in the Davenport family chapel.³ In 1544 the then master applied for leave to appoint a deputy to teach in his absence while he acted as priest in the new Chester diocese, and a replacement was found until he resumed his position in 1557.⁴

The dissolution of chantries in 1548 affected the school's constitution. In return for a substantial payment the Goldsmiths were relieved of their obligations to maintain chantry priests 'for superstitious purposes',⁵ and at Stockport the master was released from his chantry duties, although he remained in holy orders and continued to receive his salary.⁶ There was little break in the educational tradition. The later

⁹² Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 51–3.

⁹³ Ibid. 57–71; inf. supplied by the headmaster.

⁹⁴ Semper, *Sandbach Sch.* 45–7, 51–2, 59–60, 65–6.

⁹⁵ Thanks are due to Mr. F. W. Scott and his staff at Stockport grammar sch. and to the Goldsmith's Co. for making available the rec. in their keeping. B. Varley, *Hist. Stockport Grammar Sch.* (2nd edn. 1957) is most useful.

⁹⁶ Varley, *Hist.* 2–15; T. F. Reddaway and L. E. M. Walker, *Early Hist. of Goldsmiths' Co.*, 1327–1509, 176–7.

⁹⁷ Varley, *Hist.* 23–7. There are copies of the will at the sch., at Woodbank Park, Stockport, and in the Goldsmiths' Co. deed reg. ii, ff. 271a–275a.

⁹⁸ Varley, *Hist.* 37–8, 55.

⁹⁹ Goldsmiths' Co. deeds reg., ii, ff. 276a–277a.

¹ W. Prideaux, *Memorials of Goldsmiths' Co.* i. 33–4.

² Varley, *Hist.* 50; *Alum. Cantab. to 1751*, s.v. Geo. Samford (*recte* Bamford).

³ Varley, *Hist.* 41–2; H. Heginbotham, *Hist. Stockport*, i. 197–8.

⁴ Varley, *Hist.* 51–2; *Earliest Ordination Bk. of Dioc. of Chester* (R.S.L.C. xliii), 49, 53, 59, 66; J. P. Earwaker, *E. Ches.* i. 359.

⁵ Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 200; Prideaux, *Memorials*, i. 55.

⁶ Varley, *Hist.* 56–7.

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16th-century masters were generally Oxford or Cambridge graduates, and by the 1580s were sending boys to the universities.⁷ They included learned men; William Nicholson, for example, left the school a Greek stapula, a Latin dictionary, and a Hebrew Bible and dictionary.⁸ The school attracted numerous pupils, especially as until the 1570s, if not later, it was free to the sons of strangers as well as Stockport residents.⁹ Pupils included the sons of small farmers and tradesmen, as well as those of prominent local gentry families.¹⁰ In the early 17th century the regicide John Bradshaw attended the school before going on to Bunbury.¹¹

In 1601 a controversy arose over the appointment of a new master. The Goldsmiths appointed the candidate recommended by the mayor, aldermen, and townsmen of Stockport, but afterwards ejected him at the request of the rector, the local gentry, and the bishop of Chester. The townsmen in turn threw the new man out of his house and forced him to resign in 1603. No fresh appointment was made until 1604. In 1607 there were further complaints by the townspeople and the company asked some local gentlemen to investigate the matter. Their decision went against the master, and after an unsuccessful appeal to the bishop of Chester he was dismissed and replaced in 1609.¹² The incidents illustrate the company's difficulties in making appointments in a place so distant from London. Although they insisted on the candidates presenting themselves in person before them,¹³ they were incompetent to adjudicate between divergent local interests. Masters were often initially appointed by the local inhabitants, and occasionally a temporary locum tenens was appointed without the company's knowledge when a nomination was disputed or delayed.¹⁴

Despite a steadily rising income from the Shaa properties the Goldsmiths continued to pay the master the increasingly inadequate salary of £10 a year.¹⁵ In 1568 the company was petitioned to allow the master to augment his salary by charging fees to the children of strangers; the reply is unknown, but in 1578 a similar petition was rejected.¹⁶ The masters were forced to take curacies to supplement their income.¹⁷ Efforts were made locally to improve their lot; in the late 16th century the lord of the manor supplemented the salary and a 'consideration' was paid to the master by the local gentry and townsmen. The Goldsmiths requested the continuance of the latter in 1602, and in 1605 a further £10 was devised to maintain an usher.¹⁸ Gradually local endowments accumulated. By 1603 the school had a home of its own in the upper storey of a house belonging to the mercer Alexander Lowe,¹⁹ and in 1608 it acquired the whole house at a rent of 6s. 8d., under the terms of Lowe's will, together with further sums to augment the master's salary.²⁰ A school fund was established, which increased steadily

throughout the 17th century and eventually provided the master with £7 a year; the money was entrusted to the mayor and corporation, who took an increasing part in the school's affairs, calling themselves the school feoffees and assuming responsibility for repairs.²¹

The corporation's growing influence made the company more anxious to assert its right to appoint. In 1630 despite a letter from the mayor, aldermen, and inhabitants of Stockport requesting that a candidate be spared the inconvenience and expense of journeying to London, the company insisted on his appearing before them and offered him 30s. in compensation. When in 1634 Samuel Edwards informed the company that he had resigned and been succeeded by Bradley Heyhurst, the Goldsmiths resolved that Heyhurst should only be accepted after the townspeople should have written to them and the master designate appeared before them. They continually reminded the corporation and the lord of the manor that their nominees held office only on sufferance until formally appointed by the company. By 1651 a *modus vivendi* had been established, the corporation in practice appointing but observing the form by sending their candidate to London to appear before the company. In 1668 the Goldsmiths accepted the removal of their nominee by the mayor and corporation, and in the early 18th century the master was said to be nominated by the senior aldermen.²²

The masters thus appointed were usually young graduates fresh from university.²³ The failure to increase the master's salary reduced the school's prestige; two successive masters deserted their post in the 1640's and in the same period the mayor, corporation, and inhabitants twice complained about the inadequacy of the wages.²⁴ Nevertheless the school survived. In 1653 Samuel Eaton, an Independent minister patronized by the Dukinfields of Dukinfield, preached there.²⁵ From the late 1650s it prospered, sending a steady stream of pupils to the universities,²⁶ including William Shippen, a leading Jacobite M.P. between 1707 and 1743, and his brother Robert, principal of Brasenose College, Oxford (1710-45) and vice-chancellor of the university (1718-22).²⁷ In the early 18th century the school acquired considerable prestige under the Revd. Joseph Dale, master 1703-52, who between 1717 and 1734 sent 19 pupils to a single Cambridge college. Dale's pupils, many of whom were from upper-class families such as the Cavendishes, came from places as distant as Ashbourne and Bakewell (Derb.) and Bolton (Lancs.). Among them was John Hulse, a benefactor of Cambridge university.²⁸ Dale's successor began in less favourable circumstances. Lady Warren claimed the nomination in right of her son, who was lord of the manor, but the company rejected her nominee in favour of its own

⁷ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 278-9, 375; Varley, *Hist.* 158.

⁸ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 183.

⁹ Prideaux, *Memorials*, i. 69.

¹⁰ Varley, *Hist.* 111-12, 309.

¹¹ D.N.B.

¹² Varley, *Hist.* 59-63; Prideaux, *Memorials*, i. 101.

¹³ Varley, *Hist.* 80.

¹⁴ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 279; Varley, *Hist.* 79, 162.

¹⁵ Varley, *Hist.* 55-8.

¹⁶ Prideaux, *Memorials*, i. 69; Varley, *Hist.* 157-8.

¹⁷ Varley, *Hist.* 111.

¹⁸ Ches. R.O., Wm. Nicholson's will, 1597; Varley, *Hist.* 95, 216-17.

¹⁹ Prideaux, *Memorials*, i. 102.

²⁰ Ches. R.O., Alexander Lowe's will, 1608.

²¹ Varley, *Hist.* 63-5, 219-20, 317.

²² Ibid. 80-8; Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 301-2.

²³ Varley, *Hist.* 162-76; Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 279-80.

²⁴ Varley, *Hist.* 83-4, 96-7.

²⁵ Ibid. 110-11.

²⁶ Ibid. 309-12.

²⁷ D.N.B.
²⁸ Varley, *Hist.* 176-9, 312-16; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 188; D.N.B.

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candidate, an Oxford graduate. Little is known of the school thereafter beyond the fact that by the 1790s it had become almost exclusively fee-paying.²⁹

Until 1829 the Goldsmiths contributed only £10 a year to the school's expenses, and indeed in the first decades of the 18th century only provided £9 a year.³⁰ There were few other endowments. In 1711 Edward Warren, lord of the manor, devised property worth £10 a year for the use of the master, but his bequest was counterbalanced by the decline of the corporation's fund, which petered out in the 1770s.³¹ Although Joseph Dale was a man of substance his successors were poorer and found it necessary to combine the mastership with local curacies.³² In 1778 the master's income was estimated at £30 a year,³³ and the master appointed in 1792, who came expecting £300 a year, left after seven months.³⁴ His successor's income of £280 a year came mostly from fees, for in 1818 the endowments still produced only £46.³⁵

A revival of the Goldsmiths' interest in the school was marked by an inspection carried out by the wardens in 1826. They found 42 boys, aged between 8 and 14, 'definitely not children of the poor', and felt that the master was contravening the founder's will; he was discouraging free boys by forcing them to perform menial tasks. The master, whose pupils had included the future explorer and admiral George Black,³⁶ claimed to offer 'a more enlarged scale of education' than that intended by the founder, with Greek, Latin, and English history included in his curriculum, and asserted that the corporation and inhabitants of Stockport had approved his fees. Nevertheless the townsfolk showed little enthusiasm for the school; they made only the most meagre improvements to the dilapidated building and eventually forced the master to apply to the company for its repair.³⁷ After the master's death in 1829 the Goldsmiths built a lavish new school-house on land in Greek Street given by Frances Warren, Lady Vernon, and substantially increased the stipends of master and usher, to £210 and £105 a year respectively. They also issued new statutes. The school was to take both boarders and day pupils and was to be free to all boys from Stockport, provided numbers did not exceed 150. The curriculum was to include reading, writing, and arithmetic, English grammar, mathematics, Latin, and Greek, and pupils were to be aged between 6 and 14, only remaining longer after obtaining special permission from the governors.³⁸ The foundation was to be supervised by a small committee of visitors including *ex officio* the mayor and rector of Stockport.³⁹

Under the new master, Thomas Middleton, the school attained high standards, and gifted boys were allowed to remain beyond the age of fourteen, to proceed to university.⁴⁰ In the 1840s, however, there were complaints about the conduct of the school, and

after Middleton's resignation in 1847 the company drew up fresh statutes. Henceforth the school was to be divided into an upper department of 100 and a lower of 50, with pupils aged between 7 and 16. The headmaster, who was no longer required to be an Anglican clergyman, was allowed to charge fees in the upper school, but the lower was to remain free. An additional usher was to be appointed and salaries were raised by 50 per cent.⁴¹ The reorganized school, whose pupils included the poet Thomas Ashe,⁴² received favourable reports from its examiners,⁴³ and by 1856 there were 48 boys in the lower department and 99 in the upper, one of whom was over 16 years old.⁴⁴ Meanwhile the company's generosity to the school continued; two exhibitions were founded in 1837 to assist pupils going to Oxford and Cambridge, and in the same year the company bought a large plot of land adjoining the school for a playground. In 1839 they built a cottage for the second master, and the reorganization of 1848 was accompanied by a gift of £300 to the new master.⁴⁵

In the 1850s, however, the Goldsmiths were increasingly troubled by disputes about the school's Anglican affiliations, and they took offence when in 1857 a local nonconformist gentleman built a rival school, which he called Stockport High School, at his own expense. In 1859 the clerk to the company estimated that during the previous 30 years the grammar school had cost more than £30,000; he complained that it had 'occasioned much trouble', and recommended that it be transferred to Stockport corporation with an annual endowment of £300, and that the two exhibitions be discontinued.⁴⁶ Despite petitions from the local inhabitants Stockport corporation took possession of the school buildings and site in 1859, having agreed that at least 30 boys were to be taught free and that the school would be conducted in accordance with Anglican principles.⁴⁷ Thereafter the company refused all contact with the school, rejecting requests to participate in new Schemes or to resume some part of its former patronage.⁴⁸ In 1894 the annuity was redeemed and a move to demand a proportion of the income from the original Shaa endowment was blocked.⁴⁹

Under a new Scheme drawn up by Stockport corporation with the aid of the Charity Commissioners, there were twelve governors appointed by the corporation and chaired by the mayor *ex officio*. The headmaster, who was still required to be in Anglican orders, was allowed to take up to 10 private boarders, and 30 boys were to be taught free as foundationers. The school remained divided into upper and lower departments, the former taking pupils to the age of 18 and the latter to the age of 14. Fees ranged from £3 to £6 a year, and the curriculum included Greek and Latin, ancient and modern history, geography,

²⁹ Varley, *Hist.* 90-1, 180-1, 184.

³⁰ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 301-2.

³¹ Goldsmith's Co. rec., R. III. 200; Stockport grammar sch. rec., town's bk.

³² Varley, *Hist.* 176-9, 183-4.

³³ Ches. R.O., EDV 7/1/104.

³⁴ Varley, *Hist.* 104-5.

³⁵ Ibid. 189-90; Carlisle, *Endowed Grammar Schs.* i. 126.

³⁶ D.N.B.

³⁷ Varley, *Hist.* 184-91.

³⁸ Ibid. 221-2; 31st Rep. Com. Char. 552.

³⁹ Varley, *Hist.* 69-70.

⁴⁰ Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 198a, 206.

⁴¹ Ibid. R. III. 204.

⁴² D.N.B.

⁴³ Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 206.

⁴⁴ Ibid. R. III. 208.

⁴⁵ Varley, *Hist.* 69-71, 129, 200.

⁴⁶ Goldsmith's Co. rec., R. III. 210; W. Prideaux, *Char. under Management of Goldsmiths' Co.* 64.

⁴⁷ Varley, *Hist.* 72-3.

⁴⁸ Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 215, 220-1; Prideaux, *Char.* 65.

⁴⁹ Varley, *Hist.* 75-6; Prideaux, *Char.* 65-7; Goldsmiths' Co. rec. R. III. 216-17.

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mathematics, physical science, a modern foreign language, writing, and arithmetic.⁵⁰ Under its new headmaster, Charles Hamilton, formerly master of the rival High School, the grammar school was soon in difficulties. Fees rose and numbers dwindled. In 1864 there were 179 boys at the school, including the future mathematician Horace Lamb,⁵¹ but by 1887 there were only seventeen.⁵² In 1881 it was felt necessary to draw up a new Scheme to end the corporation's sole control of the school. The new governing body included representatives of local J.P.s and Stockport town council. The headmaster was no longer required to be in holy orders and boarders were to be discontinued. Fees were fixed at £8-16 for seniors and £4-8 for juniors, up to 10 per cent of the school being allowed free places. The curriculum included the elements, geography, history, English grammar, composition, and literature, mathematics, Latin, French, natural science, and book-keeping, Greek and German being extras. As a result of a gift from J. B. Smith, the Scheme also provided for an exhibition worth £40 a year, tenable at a British university or other institution of higher education.⁵³

Under W. A. Pemberton, headmaster 1888-1902, the school improved. Pupils numbered over 100,⁵⁴ and included the historian Maurice Powicke (later Sir Maurice) and the playwright W. S. Houghton.⁵⁵ Pemberton's successor, A. E. Daniels, was the first lay headmaster; under him the school expanded further, aided by grants from the Board of Education,⁵⁶ and in 1906 a further Scheme established a fresh governing body, including the mayor of Stockport and members appointed by Manchester university and the local authorities. The age limits were fixed at 8 and 18 and fees were lowered, boarders paying extra. In 1909 the Scheme was amended to permit the establishment of a

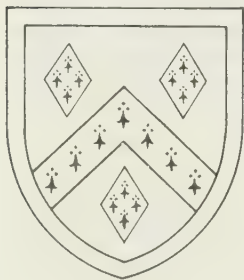
there were 350 pupils, and under his successor numbers rose to over 400.⁵⁹ In 1933 the school gained membership of the Headmasters' Conference,⁶⁰ and in 1938 the prime warden of the Goldsmiths' Company accepted the office of patron.⁶¹

The Education Act, 1944, had little effect on the school, which retained its direct grant status and already fulfilled the Act's requirement that at least one quarter of the places should be at the local education authority's disposal.⁶² Expansion continued and by 1967 the school contained more than 650 boys, necessitating new buildings opened in 1972. When the direct grant was abolished in 1976 the school became independent.⁶³

The first school building, bequeathed by Alexander Lowe and vacated in 1829, was destroyed in 1882.⁶⁴ Its successor in Greek Street, demolished in 1923, was designed by Philip Hardwick, architect of the Goldsmiths' new hall, to contain a schoolroom and library and accommodation for the headmaster and boarders. It was in a domestic Tudor style and adorned with a stone tablet commemorating Shaa's foundation and the company's patronage.⁶⁵ The present buildings erected between 1914 and 1916 by the architects Spalding and Theakston, are of brick and stone, arranged round a quadrangle.⁶⁶ Additions were made in 1949, 1956-7, and 1972, when Dex Harrison's new building with a zig-zag roof was opened.⁶⁷

WALLASEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE earliest known schoolmaster at Wallasey,⁶⁸ Randal Geest, died in 1595.⁶⁹ No endowments are recorded until 1618, when Richard Hill and his son, also named Richard, each gave 20s. to be 'lent forth' to maintain a schoolmaster to teach the poor of the parish. By 1619 the rector was responsible for paying the salary.⁷⁰ The first substantial endowment came only in 1654, when Capt. Henry Meoles, brother of William Meoles of Wallasey, left £125 to support a schoolmaster in Wallasey. In 1658 Henry Meoles's nephew, another Capt. Henry Meoles, built a schoolhouse at his own cost on the north side of the parish church, which the parishioners agreed to maintain under the churchwardens' supervision and roofed with slate in 1660 and 1661.⁷¹ Soon afterwards Henry Young devised the Winter Hey, a field at Seacombe, to the school.⁷² In the late 17th and early 18th centuries the trustees of the school's funds were alleged to have mismanaged them;⁷³ in 1753 the vestry placed the endowments under the supervision of the churchwardens and of one parishioner from each township, and



STOCKPORT GRAMMAR SCHOOL.
*Sable, a chevron between three
fusils ermineois, a bordure or.*
[Granted 1962.]

preparatory department.⁵⁷ In 1914, aided by a very large grant from the Ephraim Hallam charity, the school moved from its overcrowded premises in Greek Street to new buildings at Mile End, accommodating more than 200 boys.⁵⁸ When Daniels retired in 1928

⁵⁰ Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 210.

⁵¹ D.N.B.

⁵² Varley, *Hist.* 132-3, 205-6.

⁵³ Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 214; Varley, *Hist.* 222-3.

⁵⁴ Varley, *Hist.* 133-4, 206-7.

⁵⁵ D.N.B.

⁵⁶ Varley, *Hist.* 134-5, 209-10.

⁵⁷ Char. Com. file.

⁵⁸ Varley, *Hist.* 139-40.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 142.

⁶⁰ Whitaker's *Almanack* (1933), 435.

⁶¹ Varley, *Hist.* 76-7, 143-5. In 1955 the governing body was altered to include a representative of the Goldsmiths.

⁶² Varley, *Hist.* 174.

⁶³ *Ches. Life*, April 1967; inf. supplied by the headmaster.

⁶⁴ Varley, *Hist.* 121.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 135; Goldsmiths' Co. rec., R. III. 196. The company possesses Hardwick's plans.

⁶⁶ Varley, *Hist.* 137-9.

⁶⁷ Inf. supplied by the headmaster.

⁶⁸ Thanks are due to Mr. J. A. Bruce, headmaster of the Henry Meoles School, and to the rector and churchwardens of St. Hilary's church, Wallasey, for their help in the preparation of this account.

⁶⁹ Wallasey par. reg.

⁷⁰ Ibid.; M. Eggleshaw, *Hist. Wallasey Grammar Sch.* 19.

⁷¹ Wallasey par. reg.; Wallasey sch. rec. (MS. hist. of sch. by A. J. Meade).

⁷² Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 27, 280.

⁷³ *Ches. R.O.*, EDV 1/64, f. 8v.; Wallasey churchwardens' acct. bk., 6 May 1714, 5 July 1727.

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reaffirmed the parish commitment to keep the school-house in repair from its own funds rather than from those of the school.⁷⁴

Until 1781 the appointment of the headmaster was by nomination at the vestry; in that year an appointment was made by the rector and churchwardens.⁷⁵ None of the masters appointed before 1727 is known to have been a graduate, though Henry Robinson, master from c. 1662 to 1727, was learned enough to produce a history of the village.⁷⁶ The salary of £14 a year was probably too low to attract suitably qualified candidates.⁷⁷ Although graduate masters were appointed between 1727 and 1753, the school remained little more than a parish school.⁷⁸ In 1836 there were 18 girls and 65 boys learning reading, writing and arithmetic; a few were taught history and English grammar, and one was learning Latin.⁷⁹

In 1852 a protracted lawsuit over the governorship and the appointment of the master was ended by the adoption of a Scheme drawn up in Chancery. The rector and churchwardens and nine local gentlemen were to be trustees. Mathematics, arithmetic, writing, English and composition, history, geography, and the 'elements of the practical arts and sciences' were to be taught free; Greek, Latin, French, and German were to be taught as extras for fees fixed by the trustees. Age limits were put at 8–16, and provision was made for the appointment of an assistant mistress if the school's income should rise to £150.⁸⁰ The costs of the lawsuit, however, so eroded the school's finances that the master's salary was not paid regularly after 1848;⁸¹ when the rector of Wallasey inspected the school in 1854 he found only 20 pupils under an ignorant and lax master.⁸² Seven years later the trustees found it necessary to submit the school to the Charity Commissioners' control.⁸³ A new school-house in St. George's Road, paid for largely by a sale of land, was built in 1864.⁸⁴

Shortly after the move the school was investigated by the Taunton Commission. They found that instruction was 'neither advanced nor thorough', discipline was poor, and most pupils left at the age of eleven; the school was of a lower class than the Scheme of 1852 demanded and the wealth and number of the local population warranted.⁸⁵ As a result of the criticisms an assistant master was appointed,⁸⁶ and in 1873 the school was reorganized under a new Scheme. The local board and, when it had been formed, the local school board were to choose half the governors. The school, which was to be for day boys only, was to supply a

'liberal and practical education' to pupils aged between 8 and 17; the curriculum was to include reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, mathematics, history, geography, foreign languages, natural science, and English grammar and composition. There were to be five free scholarships open only to boys from elementary schools in the parish and six half-fee foundation scholarships open to all boys in the school. The old building was to be converted into a boys' elementary school and the grammar school was to move to a new site in the middle of Wallasey.⁸⁷

The reorganized school opened in 1876 under a new graduate master, D. F. Ranking.⁸⁸ Assisted by an increasing number of free places funded by local charities and later by the county council, it quickly became popular in the town, which was growing very rapidly in the late 19th century. In 1883 the buildings had to be enlarged, and three years later there were 190 pupils, mostly the sons of local tradesmen but including a few from more affluent professional backgrounds. Several of the richer boys went on to university, and by 1890 there were some ten pupils aged 16 or more.⁸⁹ Shortly afterwards the Charity Commission's inspector tempered a generally favourable report on the school by expressing the fear that its endowment, then worth only £50 a year, would inhibit necessary expansion.⁹⁰ In 1895 the Scheme was amended to allow for the enlargement of the governing body to include two representatives of Cheshire county council and one of Liverpool university; the headmaster was also authorized to take boarders.⁹¹ Nevertheless the smallness of the endowment continued to be blamed for deficiencies in advanced teaching at the school;⁹² in 1909, after several years of negotiation, the school was transferred to Cheshire county council, and three years later control was assumed by the newly created county borough of Wallasey.⁹³

With the transfer the school grew rapidly. Numbers rose from c. 180 in 1903 to c. 300 in 1909, and new buildings were opened in 1911. In 1919 there were 75 free and 572 fee-paying pupils. The quality of the intake improved; between 1910 and 1912 pupils included David Lindsay Keir and Alan Wilson both later knighted.⁹⁴ The curriculum in the 1920s included Latin and Greek, modern languages, mathematics, natural science, history, and geography, and by 1930, although about half the boys came from local elementary schools and most left at the age of sixteen to enter commerce, about 20 former pupils had proceeded to

⁷⁴ Ches. R.O., subject file Wallasey (Winch, *Wallasey Free Sch.* 4–5); Wallasey churchwardens' acct. bk., 30 Nov. 1753; Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 46–7.

⁷⁵ W. C. Ashby Pritt, 'H. Robinson's Acct. of Wallasey', *T.H.S.L.C.* xliii. 9–10; Wallasey Churchwardens' acct. bk., 23 Nov. 1727, 26 May 1754, 14 Dec. 1755; Ches. R.O., EDP 281/12; *ibid.*, subject file Wallasey (H. Winch, *Some Proc. relating to Wallasey Free Sch.*, *passim*).

⁷⁶ Rogers, 'Teaching Profession', 282; *T.H.S.L.C.* xliii. 9–21; Robson, *Educ. in Ches.* 49.

⁷⁷ Gastrell, *Not. Cest.* i. 176.

⁷⁸ E. C. Woods and P. C. Brown, *Rise and Progress of Wallasey* (2nd edn.), 380–4; Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 40–1, 43; Wallasey churchwardens' acct. bk., 26 May 1754; Ches. R.O., EDP 7/139.

⁷⁹ 31st Rep. Com. Char. 482.

⁸⁰ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 62–5, 279–89; *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 96–7; Wallasey churchwardens' acct. bk., 13 April 1842; Ches. R.O., subject file Wallasey (Winch,

Wallasey Free Sch. passim).

⁸¹ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 68.

⁸² Woods and Brown, *Rise and Progress*, 383.

⁸³ P.R.O., ED 27/331.

⁸⁴ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 96–7; P.R.O., ED 26/331, 333; Woods and Brown, *Rise and Progress*, 275.

⁸⁵ *Schs. Inquiry Com.* xvii. 96–7.

⁸⁶ Woods and Brown, *Rise and Progress*, 384.

⁸⁷ P.R.O., ED 27/334.

⁸⁸ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 101, 109–11, 113; P.R.O., ED 27/335.

⁸⁹ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 102–3, 113, 117, 124–5.

⁹⁰ P.R.O., ED 27/330; cf. Ches. R.O., SL 300/13/11; P.R.O., ED 27/336.

⁹¹ P.R.O., ED 27/337.

⁹² Ches. R.O., SL 300/13/13; Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 118–20.

⁹³ Wallasey sch. rec.; Char. Com. files (London).

⁹⁴ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 226, 240–2, 247.

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university.⁹⁵ From the 1930s the sixth form expanded, and with it the numbers going on to university,⁹⁶ and from 1933 to 1960 the headmasters were elected members of the Headmasters' Conference.⁹⁷

In accordance with the Education Act, 1944, all fees were abolished, and the school was opened to boys on the basis of examination performance alone.⁹⁸ In 1967 the school moved to a new building in Leasowe as part of a Scheme to make it a senior comprehensive school. The first fully comprehensive intake entered in 1970, and in 1973 the school was renamed the Henry Meoles School.⁹⁹

The building erected in the 1650s was demolished in 1799 and replaced by a small stone school-house in Breck Road which in 1978 was used as a dwelling-house.¹ The latter's successor, a building of 1864 in St. George's Road, became an elementary school in 1876 and was demolished in 1907.² The first school in Withens Lane, erected in 1874-6 and later greatly extended, was replaced by a second in 1911 which in 1978 was occupied by a secondary school.³ The building of 1966-8 in Leasowe is a brick and timber structure designed by Richard Sheppard, Robson, and Partners.⁴

⁹⁵ Ibid. 169-74; Wallasey sch. rec. (prospectus, 1919; inspectors' rep. 1931).

⁹⁶ Wallasey sch. rec. (inspectors' rep. 1948).

⁹⁷ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 194-5; Woods and Brown, *Rise and Progress*, 274.

⁹⁸ Wallasey sch. rec.

⁹⁹ Ibid.; Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 262, 264-5, 273.

¹ Woods and Brown, *Rise and Progress*, 274-5.

² Ibid. 275-6; Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 101.

³ Eggleshaw, *Wallasey Gr. Sch.* 162-4.

⁴ Inf. from the headmaster; Wallasey sch. rec.

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NOTE. The following abbreviations used in the index, sometimes with the addition of the letter *s* to form the plural, may require elucidation: abp., archbishop; adv., advowson; Alex., Alexander; Alf., Alfred; archd., archdeacon; assoc., association; bd., board; Beds., Bedfordshire; Berks., Berkshire; bldg., building; bp., bishop; Caern., Caernarvonshire; Cant., Canterbury; Cardig., Cardiganshire; Carns., Carmarthenshire; cath., cathedral; ch., church; chant., chantry; chap., chapel; char., charity; Chas., Charles; Ches., Cheshire; co., county; coll., college; com., commission; ct., court; cttee., committee; Cumb., Cumberland; d., died; dau., daughter; Denb., Denbighshire; Derb., Derbyshire; dioc., diocese; E., east; Edm., Edmund; educ., education(-al); Edw., Edward; Eliz., Elizabeth; Eng., England, English; E.R., East Riding; fam., family; fl., flourished; Flints., Flintshire; Fred., Frederick; Gen., General; Geo., George; Geof., Geoffrey; Gilb., Gilbert; Glam., Glamorganshire; Glos., Gloucestershire; Gram., Grammar; Gt., Great; Hen., Henry; Herefs., Herefordshire; Herts., Hertfordshire; ho., house; hosp., hospital; Jas., James; J.P., justice of the peace; Lancs., Lancashire; Ld., Lord; Lich., Lichfield; Linc., Lincoln; Lincs., Lincolnshire; loc., local; man., manor; Mdx., Middlesex; Mic., Michael; mkt., market; mon., monastery; N., north; *n*, note; Nic., Nicholas; Nort., North; Northants., Northamptonshire; N.R., North Riding; Oxon., Oxfordshire; par., parish; Phil., Philip; pop., population; prot. nonconf., protestant nonconformity; Rd., Road; Revd., Reverend; Ric., Richard; riv., river; rly., railway; Rob., Robert; Rog., Roger; Rom. Cath., Roman Catholic(-ism); s., son; S., south; Salop., Shropshire; Sam., Samuel; sch., school; Sim., Simon; sis., sister; soc., society; Som., Somerset; sq., square; St., Saint, Street; Staffs., Staffordshire; Steph., Stephen; Surr., Surrey; Suss., Sussex; Thos., Thomas; vct., viscount; W., west; w., wife; Wal., Walter; Warws., Warwickshire; Westmld., Westmorland; wid., widow; Wilts., Wiltshire; Wm., William; Worc., Worcester; Worcs., Worcestershire; W.R., West Riding; Yorks., Yorkshire.

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